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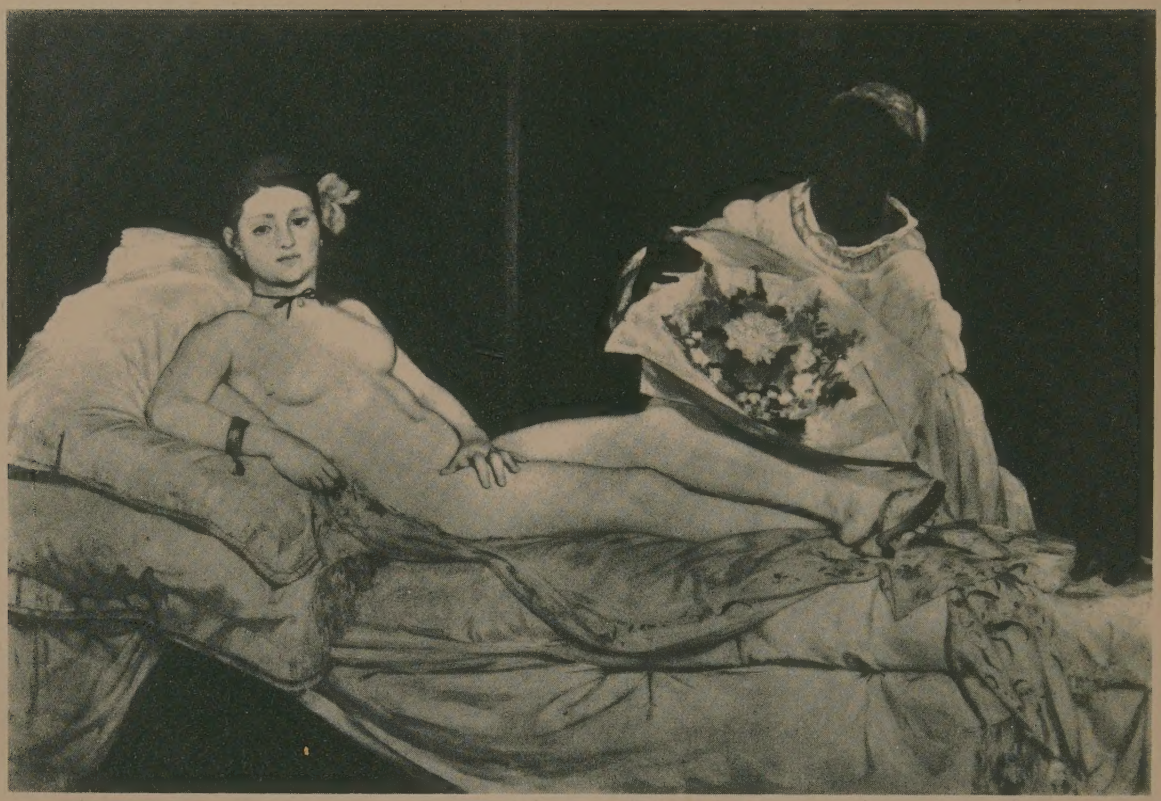
WITHDRAWN

# THE COURTEZAN OLYMPIA



OLYMPIA – *EDOUARD MANET*

IN THE LOUVRE

*The model was Victorine Meurend*

# THE COURTEZAN OLYMPIA

AN INTIMATE SURVEY OF

ARTISTS AND THEIR MISTRESS-MODELS

*by C. J. Bulliet*

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# I. OF THE TRAIL OF SPLENDOR OF THE COURTEZAN OLYMPIA

THIS is a book of art and of sin. It is a panorama, through the ages, of artists and their mistresses—frail fair women who have unclothed their bodies as models, but who, more important, have had the eager feminine vitality—the vitality that burns, the eagerness that bites—to inspire creative energy.

Despite dull theories of pedants, ever in search of a subtle, abstract "esthetic", sensuality is the main ingredient in all art that counts, just as it is the essential urge in every manifestation of life.

Under our system of morals, this vital urge can scarcely ever express itself freely—morals, that queer stricture on life, whose blind drift is toward an ultimate sterility.

Fortunately, genius has contempt for morals—always has had—always will have. For genius is as wise instinctively as God, and like God refuses steadfastly to create according to the dictate of morals. Slime and loam are the hotbeds of creation—deodorants and disinfectants kill the vital germs.

But in our civilization morality has teeth. It meddles with art

as it does with every other social activity, and is backed by a police power that can tear a canvas from a wall, even though it can no longer cut off a hand that wields a brush.

In our code of morals, sex transgression assumes first place. Almost, indeed, it preëmpts the entire decalogue, although the Hebrew lawgiver on whose precepts our neo-Jewishness (that is to say, Christianity) is founded, listed it seventh among his pet sins, and then concerned himself only with adultery, which is merely intrusion on another man's property. Healthier Mediterranean faiths, from which Christianity also drew, worried scarcely at all about sex irregularities. The present tyranny of sex transgression in the realm of morals arises out of morbid brooding through the Dark Ages on the miraculous Virginity of the Mother of the Founder of the Faith.

Genius is creative, and our guardians of morals, professional and amateur, rightly (even if ignorantly) sense a connection between the lusts of the body and this creative energy of the mind and the emotions. In the origin and realization of a great piece of art there are violent explosions of soul cells, bloody lacerations of soul membranes analogous to upheavals and tearings asunder of bodily tissue when a physical child is conceived and brought into the world. A landscape by Cézanne is just as brutally "immoral" as the most flaming of Renoir's nudes or the Sistine Madonna of Raphael.

Through the tyranny of morals, conventional art in our civiliza-

tion is thickly coated with an epidermis of respectability—hence its stupidity. Its official friends and its blue-book practitioners are constantly adding to this coat their little lime-washes of apology for anything untoward that transpires—any studio scandal—laboring to make the epidermis as impenetrable as a tortoise shell.

The man of genius must live physically alongside the ordinary mortal in this world of the demonification of the sex impulse. His social and even intellectual outlook is apt to be no different from that of his fellows. But the creative impulse in him is abnormally strong—sex or a fantastic deformation of the sex instinct. It is going to manifest itself, else he remains no artist, no creator. In the process of upheaval, his sensitiveness for the conventions, his determination to live the humdrum life morality demands may become morbid, and in the violence of the conflict between genius and morals his reason may become unbalanced. Witness poor Van Gogh, the evangelist, reproaching himself for living with his prostitute mistress, expecting to be kicked into hell any moment by an outraged God, yet clinging convulsively to the stimulant of his art energies.

At the other end of the scale are hardier, healthier souls, pagans who recognize that the impulses of their genius are of the same stuff as the impulses of their bodies, who are not ashamed nor afraid of either, and who have dared confess with brush and chisel the frankly libertine-prostitute mainspring of their art. Manet was

one, and Raphael, and Apelles, and Praxiteles, and Goya, and Boucher, and Renoir, and Rodin.

But, in between, there are painters and sculptors of genius who have conformed to the conventions—outwardly. Most of these will be found, on investigation, to have made a clumsy effort to practice the Greek ideal—a wife at home to bear and bring up children; a favorite model in the studio for soul inspiration; and this latter model or (if she is hymeneally virtuous or some patron's mistress and not to be touched), some lesser model for bodily stimulant.

The "good woman" of our conventional morality is unhappily out of place—actively detrimental in the scheme of creation as worked out by genius, and by the gods. For are not the young, sprightly gods bastards—Greek, Jewish, Mediterranean in general?

The influence of a faithful wife or a devoted mother or an anxious sister is peculiarly vicious. She is afraid of genius—jealous—fearful it will break the bonds in which she holds her man. Even the mistress is salutary only so long as she has the zest of her unconventionality—only so long as she senses the trend of her lover's inspiration and seeks to lure him on and on to accomplishment. The time generally comes when she, too, grows afraid of the monstrosity she has helped shape, and then she seeks to curb its further growth.

If the man of genius is sensitive and of feeling heart there will

VENUS – *CRANACH* FRANKFORT GALLERY

*The model was an unknown courtezan*

develop in him, and accumulate to bigger and bigger proportions, a morbid dread of hurting the feminine soul he knows to be faithful and devoted—wife, mother, sister, or mistress—and he may either explode and go insane, or else let his genius fritter away to nothingness.

In this, our book of art and sin, you will encounter them all—generally unhappy—but a happy few with no more regard for conventional morality than an ancient Greek statesman or a modern Louisville negro, animally eager, ever so often, with a new, invigorating mistress.

Our book centers around the harlot "Olympia". Through her, her creator dealt a terrific blow at the tortoise-shell epidermis of respectability. All the bilge-water of apology for art that has since been spilt around her has not had in it enough of the whitewash of esthetic sanctity to heal the crack.

Yet Olympia is no creature of an idle pornography. She is a courtezan—one of those elect of the gods whose trail through history is a way of splendor.

## II. HOW OLYMPIA CAME TO PARIS AND DROVE ALL THE LITTLE EVES TO COVER

IN THE summer of 1865 Edouard Manet hurled a volley of insults at antiquity, definitely, deliberately and with a whizzing staccato.

The engine of his malice—for malice Paris instantly scented—was a painting he called "Olympia"—a brazen, red-haired, naked prostitute from the stews of the town—and he flaunted her in the face of decency in the sacred name of art.

Olympia! The very title was an insult to all the queens of the Greek Olympus—all the Venuses, the Danaës, the chaste Dianas, the woodland nymphs, which the masters had been painting so discreetly nude through the ages.

She was an insult specifically to the marvelously beautiful, infinitely idealized "Sleeping Venus" of Giorgione, whom she aped by being stretched full length on her couch, and ostentatiously hiding with one hand her chief feminine charm, in lieu of a fig leaf.

The insult was intentional, Paris was convinced, for Manet two

SEPTEMBER MORN – *PAUL CHABAS*

LUXEMBOURG MUSEUM

*A recent sensational return to the Olympian idea*

years before had singled out Giorgione for nasty attention with a vulgar parody on the elegant "Concert" in the Louvre, which he called "Lunch on the Grass". Parisian harlots there, too, had been substituted for the poetic nude nymphs of the Italian master.

The title of "Olympia" and the pose were obvious in their challenge of all lovely nudity that had gone before in art. More immediately, and with a gadfly's tormenting sting, she was a slap in the face of dozens of petty painters who were exciting ohs and ahs of admiration with their variations of the "Odalisque" of Ingres, a daring innovation a few years before, but accepted in 1865 as smartly modern.

There was more insolence, too—Manet had a genius for it—only dimly discerned intellectually, but all the more annoying, as mental superiority always is.

Behind Olympia (whose harlot body, lean and enticing, Manet had posed like the Venus of Giorgione for the purpose of enhancing her lure, bold, frank and animal) stood a negro servant, holding in her arms a bouquet of highly colored flowers for her mistress, and at the foot of Olympia, whose toes, after the fashion of a brothel prostitute, were encased in a slipper sliding off her heel, was a black cat, with back arched and tail in the air.

Both these evil black animals, the negro wench and the cat, Paris sensed as out of Baudelaire, whose *Fleurs du Mal* was a recent disgrace to the bookstalls of Paris, just as now "Olympia" was a disgrace to the Salon.

Olympia wore a band of gold on her arm, moreover, and a slender black ribbon about her neck, and a flaming bow in her red hair. A pair of earrings completed her insolent attire—vanities all, known to courtezans since the beginning of time. Nothing feminine was hidden, except "that part of her which a winner of the Rome Prize would have veiled," as one of the critics expressed it—and the hiding of that was a coquettish gesture that has commanded attention from the Cnidian Venus to "September Morn".

Nowhere do I find it recorded that Paris ever did quite definitely realize the extent of these accumulated insults. The armlet, for example, is the sole ornament of the Cnidian Venus, lost now to us, but preserved in a spirited copy of her we know as the Venus de Medici. It is this Venus, too, who coquettishly hid the chief of her charms with her hand—a moment's inspiration, maybe, on the part of the Greek courtezan Phryne when she struck the pose her lover Praxiteles immortalized. The armlet came down through the ages—Rembrandt and Raphael we shall find adorning their mistresses with it—and this armlet Manet debased, as indignant Paris dimly sensed it, by adorning with it his vulgar prostitute.

Despite the stalwart, strenuous defenders of Manet, who have always insisted that "Olympia" was meant as a strictly serious work and that the inflamed mobs of Paris read into the picture all the malice that has smirched her, I cannot help feeling that, however innocent he may have been in the matter of the armlet, he introduced the negro and the cat with a grim grin, and that he

had Titian in mind as well as Baudelaire. "Lunch on the Grass" was, I am certain, perfectly innocent and a sober piece suggested by Giorgione's "Concert", but in the case of "Olympia", Manet must have calculated the hell he stirred up.

In Titian's day, the negro slave was a novelty in Europe, and so expensive as to be afforded only by princely houses like the Borgias and the Medici. It is the presence of such a slave, a boy, in the famous Titian portrait of the "Duchess of Ferrara" that has been evoked to fix her as Alfonso's first wife, Lucrezia Borgia, instead of his second wife, the lovely Laura di Dianti, who was his mistress while Lucrezia was alive. Lucrezia, it is argued, could have maintained such a slave—Laura could not. Titian's slave became an art motif, many times employed by later painters, appearing, for example, in Gautier-Dagoty's portrait of Madame DuBarry, proving her officially the royal favorite at the time the picture was done.

This slave—she was a girl, sometimes, instead of a boy—Manet now introduced into "Olympia", proving his prostitute a veritable queen of harlots.

The origin of the cat out of Titian has a different psychology. Titian repeated his Venuses over and over for various patrons. If the patron ordering the picture wanted to introduce a pet, usually a dog, Titian was willing, for a consideration. Different dogs accompany his various Venuses, one now lying at her feet, another playing eagerly about her torso, responding to caresses from her

hand, a third curled up asleep beside her nude body. Manet transformed the peaceful, playful dogs into a spitting cat, back arched high, as a Satanic companion of his Venus.

Not in the history of art has there been produced a work of the tremendous power to agitate that Manet injected into the calm, handsome, taunting face and figure of his undressed courtezan. All the frightened little Eves and Venuses of antiquity scurried naked to cover, and have not dared to come out any more. "Olympia" dissipated their Forest of Arden, and their poor little bodies vanished away like wraiths in the vapors of the underbrush that afforded them their last shelter. Nudes since "Olympia" have been women, not nymphs.

Through the life of the Salon of 1865, Olympia gazed out impertinently at crowds that milled in front of her daily, restrained from slashing her to ribbons by constant police watchfulness. Even at night she had to be guarded, lest some fanatic steal into the gallery and lay open her face with a dagger, or cut away that impudent hand.

The intensity of this hatred was largely moral. Nudes heretofore had been idealized into nymphs and goddesses or, more recently and more boldly but still acceptably, into inmates of Turkish harems in a far country. This "Olympia" of Manet's was of the Paris brothel, a creature right under their noses, and not even to be mentioned in decent society.

But there was something else—that peculiar and deadly fear

any established art feels when confronted by something radical, something that threatens destruction. Political states do not become more panicky when "Reds" throw bombs than do art autocracies when bolshevists of brush and chisel appear. Entrenched art is not permitted cannon to fight its foes and cannot legally use rope and dagger, but outbreaks of violence are not infrequent in excitable centers, especially the Latin. Sometimes there is a suspicion that these spectacular manifestations are not entirely impromptu. Thus Caravaggio, the Italian rebel, is branded murderer for using his dagger in broils with Bolognese rivals; on accusation he deliberately stirred them up.

The grave, established Salon had given Manet warning two years before that his gaudy colors were no more wanted than his realistic nudes in a respectable art show by rejecting "Lunch on the Grass". Appeal from their judgment was made to the Emperor, and Napoleon III ordered a Salon des Refusés, where "Lunch on the Grass" scored a resounding sensation. Intervention by the Emperor chastened the Salon czars, and so "Olympia" was accepted for the 1865 exhibition. Annoyed as was the Salon over the disgrace of the brawls in front of the red-haired *fille de joie,* there was compensation in the realization that even the Emperor (too liberal with these communards) must see the error of his ways. "Olympia" definitely ejected Manet from the Salon, and though he displayed there fitfully in other years, he never was of the elect.

"Olympia" was shown again in Manet's famous private exhibition on the threshold of the *Exposition Universelle* in 1867, from which the rebel Courbet, now a veteran, was also barred—and again "Olympia" was insulted and assaulted. That was her history in all the succeeding years, when she dared show her red head, until Manet's death in 1883.

Then, in 1884, there was held an exhibition for the sale of his paintings for the benefit of his widow. Comparative quiet attended this show (there's always a funereal air about proceedings of this sort), the only untoward outbursts of consequence being Edmond About's article recommending that the place be fumigated, and the indignation of the Salon idol, Gerome, who so far forgot his good manners as to "brandish his little cane" in front of the detested "Olympia". She was included in the sale, but somebody had the good judgment to advise her withdrawal at ten thousand francs.

"Olympia's" next public appearance was in 1889, when she was included in the *Exposition Universelle*. The American, William M. Laffan, saw her and coveted her and opened negotiations for her purchase. He had all but succeeded when another American, John Singer Sargent, patriotic enough but with a bigger universal outlook, conceived the idea that "Olympia" should be saved from stowing away in a private collection and hung in the Luxembourg. He talked to his friend Claude Monet, who immediately grew enthusiastic, and a campaign was started to raise twenty

thousand francs to rescue "Olympia" from her threatened trans-Atlantic voyage.

Opposition developed, but it came too late. The money was quickly subscribed and paid over, and the picture was offered to the French government.

Then the storm burst out in a fury that recalled the days of 1865, and the nigger came out of the woodpile and stood revealed as fully as the negress of the canvas. The "devotees of tradition" would not have this painting flaunted in the face of the world. A newspaper and magazine crusade against the "tinted tart" was inaugurated, with all the moral bitterness of a quarter of a century before.

It took a year to overcome this opposition, but at length, through the influence of powerful politicians, Claude Monet literally wrested from the Minister of Public Instruction a signature to the proper document, and "Olympia" became the property of France on November 17, 1890.

However, the opposition wasn't to be so easily beaten. "Olympia" was accepted by the Luxembourg, but she remained in "solitary confinement" for several years.

Her friends were equally determined not to accept defeat. During her period in some dark cellar, occurred the tenth anniversary of her painter's death—the lapse of time necessary before any painting can be considered for final exaltation in the galleries of the Louvre.

Her friends started a movement for her transfer. They met with little encouragement until M. Clemenceau became Prime Minister. Clemenceau had been a close personal friend of Manet, and had had his portrait painted by him. Claude Monet saw his chance. He laid the matter of "Olympia" before the new Premier. Instantly Clemenceau signed the order for transfer, and on January 6, 1907, "Olympia" left the inhospitable Luxembourg for the Louvre.

Nor was there any political monkey business this time—no languishing in dark cellars. To make up for the past, her powerful new protector saw that she was assigned a place of honor, and in the Louvre she hangs in prominence today.

Though physically secure, she still is resented by the super-sensitive to the matter of morals. Her challenge is of the quality, even though not of the intensity, of 1865—her creator has not yet been forgiven for driving to death in the underbrush the pretty little Eves and Venuses of the Italian schoolmasters.

## III. OF OLYMPIA'S CREATOR AND THE LITTLE VICTORINE OF THE RED HAIR AND WHITE SKIN

WHENCE the vitality of "Olympia", who after two-thirds of a century has not even yet lost power to stir angry strife? Manet, the artist, we accept with cool blood—we do not quarrel over him any more as we do over his friend Cézanne. But over this one picture we still fight—into this red-haired harlot Manet seems to have poured the essence of his rebel being—she transcends him as the memory of Venus arising out of the waves puts into penumbral shadows her painter Apelles.

Zola reconstructed the psychology of the painter of "Olympia" in his novel *L'Œuvre;* though, being a friend of Manet and of Manet's female circle, and being a gentleman writing when most of them were alive, he purposely muddled his picture, making Claude Lantier a composite of Manet and Cézanne, and blurring still more determinedly the features of the little Christine.

The intimate life of Manet has yet to be written, and the years that are piling slowly up since his death—already nearly fifty of them—are gradually effacing the data in the memories of men

growing feeble. Van Gogh we have, vividly preserved in his letters, and Gauguin talked with rare brutal candor in his journals. Manet has been largely at the mercy of Theodore Duret, a gentleman of discretion, who has no taste for dragging frailties from their dread abode.

We are permitted to know, though, that the model for "Olympia" was Victorine Meurend, "a young girl whom Manet had met by chance in the midst of the crowd in a room at the *Palais de Justice*. He had been struck with her original appearance and her decided ways. She had reddish-blonde hair, a very white skin, and a very peculiar expression."

Manet invited her to his studio, and first painted a head of her. Then he used her as model for two draped figures, "The Street Singer" and "Mlle. Victorine en Costume d'Espada".

"From this time she became his favorite model, and all those who knew Manet and frequented his studio between 1862 and 1875 became acquainted with Victorine. She also posed for the woman in the 'Lunch on the Grass', for 'Olympia', 'The Young Woman in 1866', 'The Guitar Player', and the woman in blue in 'The Railway'."

Simple enough, apparently—Manet in the joy of young male animal life transferring to canvas a lithe, exotic female who had taken his fancy, summing up in her exuberant nudity the current sensualism of Paris, the *baudelairienne*.

But the artist's love life at this period was not so simple as that.

While "Olympia" was in process of emotional gestation, Manet was marrying Suzanne, daughter of the Dutch sculptor Leenhoff, was beginning his lifelong devotion to the enchantress Berthe Morisot, the paramount female influence in his career, and was studying with intensity the dark Creole beauty of the mistress of his poet friend Baudelaire.

It was a busy year in affairs of the heart for the painter no longer in callow immaturity, having now reached the age of thirty-one, an age that still takes love seriously but with dawning judgment. Who knows what rivalry the little Victorine had in the painter's imagination as he studied intently her nudity, transferring spirit as well as dazzling flesh to his canvas?

Before we examine into Zola's reconstruction of the painter's psychology, let us pursue the love life of Manet so far as it has been revealed. All this was at Zola's disposal when he made to live again the vanished days and nights of '63 (the year of the painting of "Olympia")—all this and much more, for Zola was of the number who went to the grave without writing the biography we should have of Manet.

Manet seems to have possessed something of that temperamental shyness of women that was the curse of Cézanne and that Zola concealed behind broadsides of blatant literary pornography. Manet alone of the three friends succeeded in getting this shyness well in hand.

It was Berthe Morisot who made to the painter the advances

that culminated in their romance, apparently one of the loftiest platonic friendships in history.

Berthe and her sister Edma, copying old masters in the Louvre, as was the system of art instruction in that day, noticed a shy young man who quite often set up his easel in the same gallery. They met, through some manipulation of the sisters, but Manet did not permit himself to become too much interested when he found they were wealthy. He was of a well-to-do family himself, but then he was serious about his art, while these two girls could be nothing more than dilettantes. They could be neither mistresses nor models, so of what earthly use were they to a painter?

But Berthe was not discouraged. Whatever she may have wanted to be to him, her pursuit—slow, delicate, polite, well-bred—survived his engagement to Mlle. Leenhoff—survived his marriage. She even took advantage of the new situation. Adroitly she struck up a friendship with the new Madame Manet, and also with the mother of her hero. The white sincerity of Berthe Morisot is proven by the fact that both these friendships were to endure.

Manet accepted Berthe as his pupil—and as his model.

But Victorine posed for the nude, and after her came a model known as Marguerite, she who is pictured in the series of pastels of bathers at tubs, which Manet—and his disciple Berthe Morisot—did under the hypnotic influence of Degas. Marguerite, like Victorine, was a girl of personality—a friend of Manet's, as well as his model, and apparently a friend of Mme. Manet's and

Berthe Morisot's. Manet could no more abide a professional, paid-by-the-hour model than Jean-Jacques Rousseau could abide a professional prostitute.

Berthe Morisot appears first distinctively in Manet's work as the seated figure in "The Balcony", exhibited in 1869. The standing figure is not identified by the authorities except that she was a professional model—she resembles Victorine. The picture was painted after Berthe had begun to share Manet's studio. Edma had married and given up the idea of being a painter, and Berthe was taken intimately into the Manet family.

She was destined to become even more intimate. In 1874 she married Eugene Manet, her idol's younger brother. Just before that event she sat for "Le Repos", her best portrait and one of Manet's decided masterworks.

Meanwhile another painter, Eva Gonzales, had attached herself to Manet as a pupil—and she likewise became his model. Her record, too, belongs within the realm of discretion.

Baudelaire's mistress, whom Manet painted stretched voluptuously on a couch the year he painted "Olympia", seems to have passed early from the scene. But her memory lingered. A decade later, Manet found her successor in Madame Nina de Callias, a Spanish beauty, friend of another poet friend of the painter, Stéphane Mallarmé.

"It is to be regretted," laments Manet's other biographer, Blanche, "that Manet did not ask her to pose as often as Berthe

Morisot, to whom was kin this dark-haired lady with her white skin and her Spanish *morbidezza.*"

The record is confused when not silent as to who posed for whom among the painted personages of the last eight years of Manet's life, and it may be indiscreet to ask. Manet is not particularly noted for his nudes after "Lunch on the Grass" and "Olympia", both posed by Victorine, with the exception of the bath-tub pastels credited to Marguerite, but he did some daring things like "Nana", which stirred a minor Olympian tempest.

Duret hints that the model for "Nana", suggested by Zola's actress, was a professional prostitute. Her face, however, is not unlike that of the lady of "Le Repos" or that of "Mlle. E. V. of 1870", for whom Eva Gonzales sat. Manet liked the type—black eyes, with a Spanish cast of features. Goya was one of his gods.

The chances are not unlikely that Berthe Morisot became as jealous of her brother-in-law's virtue as was his own wife, though the little Hollander's jealousy doesn't seem to have been oppressive.

Mme. Manet may not have gone so far in liberality as Zola's wife, who provided her lord with two young mistresses in her own house when his genius needed their stimulus, or Victor Hugo's wife, who seems to have seen nothing more comic in his grand gesture with regard to Juliette than this pompous, godlike ass himself beheld. But she permitted and encouraged the Morisot devotion, made friends with Victorine even on her honey-

moon, raised no objection to Marguerite, liked Eva Gonzales, and was glad when Stéphane Mallarmé, friend of Nina, helped Berthe Morisot into the Luxembourg. Mallarmé, incidentally, became Berthe's slave, but she never swerved from her devotion to Manet, even when Guy de Maupassant's malady was hurrying him to the grave.

How frankly his distinguished models may have revealed to him their charms in the intensity of their rivalry remains for the unpublished biography to disclose. It was an age of frankness—all ages, indeed, are frank when lovely women confront painters of genius. But there was no scandal.

Toward the end of his life, when his constitution was weakening under strain of the disease that slowly killed him, Manet relaxed somewhat his outward moral restraint.

"It seems as though the company of fascinating young women of easy morals and their lovers was attracting him more and more as he was less and less able to go out," relates Blanche, a little less discreet than Duret.

"Among his women friends were Méry Laurent, Valtesse de la Bigne—both demi-mondaines who had a circle of fashionable artists, financiers, wealthy foreigners, who, little by little, began to come to the new studio at Number 77, Rue d'Amsterdam: a phalanstery of painters buzzing like a hive of bees."

He made pastels of them "without charge—of Mlle. Suzette Lemaire, pretty Mme. Michel-Lévy, of Mme. de Rasty, a famous

beauty, besides the mistresses of many a prominent financier, among whom were Valtesse and Méry Laurent".

They accepted his pastels as gifts, but could not hide from the sensitive painter their thoughts that the pictures were hideous. In the crumbling of his intellect, he felt how much happier he would be could he dash off the fashionable portraits of Chaplin or paint the smooth nudes of Bouguereau and Cabanel.

"Amateurs of art, rich and influential at the Opera, on Change, in the society of the Champs-Elysées, began to turn up at the studio in the rue de Clichy where such lovely girls were posing. Visitors met there towards the close of the afternoon in the great bare studio; Manet having finished his sitting, chatted with his visitors while resting on a sofa in the half-light. There were to be seen there, as later at Renoir's, a small number of young idlers and impenitent old men, frequenters of the ballet green-room, of race meetings, of the Grenouillère, of Bougival, of painters' studios, whose figures I see in Renoir's 'Lunch on the River'."

Here, besides the pastels, he painted "Jeanne", who prefers to remain "Madame X", and the "Amazon", for whom Henriette Chabot sat.

Ataxy struck him. Seeking desperately a cure for an incurable condition, he succeeded in poisoning his system. A leg was amputated. Eighteen days later he died. Degas, blinded with tears, followed the funeral procession—the grouch who had withheld

GREEK TORSO – *4th Century B.C.* KELEKIAN COLLECTION

*In the general fashion of the Cnidian Venus*

praise that would have meant much to Manet in those last days. Degas was muttering: "He was greater than we knew! He was greater than we knew!" Berthe Morisot stopped. She painted a few pictures after the death of Manet, but there was no further development in her unfolding genius. Her heart was in the coffin with her platonic lover.

All this and more—much more—Zola knew when he sat down to write *L'Œuvre,* to form the Christine of his novel out of the little Victorine of Manet's studio. The incidents are fictitious, and Claude Lantier has in his make-up as much of Cézanne as he has of Manet. Christine, too, is only partially of the life-blood of Victorine—in her veins doubtless mingle also corpuscles from Berthe Morisot and Mlle. Leenhoff and the Creole mistress of Baudelaire.

Christine came into Claude's life during a violent thunderstorm that drove her to shelter in his studio, where they spent a virtuous night together on separate couches. She was of good birth and intelligent. He was a struggling painter, shy and awkward in the presence of women. She visited his studio again and again after that night, watched his struggles to record his inspirations on canvas. He conceived his masterpiece. It was to be a nude extended. She was to have Christine's head—a professional model, Zoë, was to pose for her body.

But Claude discovered that "Christine's delicate head did not sit well on the other's shoulders".

Time and time again he tried—the date of the Salon was drawing near. He was in despair. She knew what was in his mind, and he knew she knew.

"The fear that he would dare to ask her did not even occur to her. . . . Days went by, and between them that fixed idea grew in intensity. The moment they were together they could not help thinking about it. Not a word was spoken on the subject, but their very silence was eloquent; they no longer made a movement, no longer exchanged a smile without stumbling upon that thought, which they found impossible to put into words, though it filled their minds. Soon nothing but that remained in their friendly intercourse."

And so it went on.

"Toward the middle of March, Christine, at one of her visits, found Claude seated before his picture overcome with sorrow. He had not even heard her enter. He remained motionless, with vacant, haggard eyes staring at his unfinished work. In another three days the delay for sending in exhibits for the Salon would expire.

" 'Well,' she inquired gently, after standing for a long time behind him, grief-stricken at seeing him in such despair.

"He started and turned round.

" 'Well, it's all up. I sha'n't exhibit anything this year. Ah! I who relied so much upon this Salon!'

"Both relapsed into despondency—a despondency and agitation full of confused thoughts. Then she resumed, thinking aloud as it were:

" 'There would still be time.'

" 'Time? Oh, no indeed. A miracle would be needed. Where am I to find a model so late in the day? Do you know, since this morning, I have been worrying, and for a moment I thought I had hit upon an idea: yes, it would be to go and fetch that girl, that Irma who came while you were here. I know well enough that she is short and not at all such as I thought of, and so I should perhaps have to change everything once more; but all the same it might be possible to make her do. Decidedly, I'll try her—'

"He stopped short. The glowing eyes with which he gazed at her clearly said: 'Ah! There's you! Ah! It would be the hoped-for miracle, and triumph would be certain, if you would make this supreme sacrifice for me. I beseech you, I ask you devoutly, as a friend, the dearest, the most beauteous, the most pure.'

"She, erect, looking very pale, seemed to hear each of those words, though all remained unspoken, and his ardently beseeching eyes overcame her. She herself did not speak. She simply did as he desired, acting almost like one in a dream. Beneath it all there lurked the thought that he must not ask elsewhere, for she was now conscious of her earlier jealous disquietude and wished to share his affections with none.

"Yet it was in silence and all chastity that she stretched herself on the couch, and took up the pose, with one arm under her head, her eyes closed.

"And Claude? Startled, full of gratitude, he had at last found again the sudden vision that he had so often evoked. But he himself did not speak; he began to paint in the deep solemn silence that had fallen upon them both.

"For two long hours he stood at his work with such manly energy that he finished right off a superb roughing out of the whole figure. Never before had he such enthusiasm in his art. It seemed to him as if he were in the presence of some saint; and at times he wondered at the transfiguration of Christine's face, whose somewhat massive jaws seemed to have receded beneath the gentle placidity which her brow and cheeks displayed.

"During those two hours she did not stir, she did not speak, but from time to time she opened her clear eyes, fixing them on some vague, distant point, and remaining thus for a moment, then closing them again, and relapsing into the lifelessness of fine marble, with the mysterious fixed smile required by the pose.

"It was by a gesture that Claude apprised her he had finished. He turned away, and when they stood face to face again, she ready to depart, they gazed at one another, overcome by emotion which still prevented them from speaking. Was it sadness, then, unconscious, unnameable sadness? For their eyes filled with tears, as if they had just spoiled their lives and dived to the depths of

SLEEPING VENUS – *GIORGIONE*

DRESDEN MUSEUM

*The model was a lady of quality, the painter's mistress*

human misery. Then, moved and grieved, unable to find a word, even of thanks, he kissed her religiously upon the brow."

Victorine and Berthe Morisot?

Zola accounts for the intensity of "Olympia"—but what about her impudence?

## IV. OF OLYMPIA'S ANCESTRESSES – THE SLEEPING VENUS WHO GAVE GIORGIONE THE KISS OF DEATH, AND THE VENUS AWAKE OF TITIAN

GIORGIONE was a revolutionist in his day, but three and a half centuries had obliterated all his sins when Manet disclosed his "Olympia", instantly recognized by Paris as an insult to the "Sleeping Venus". In another three hundred years perhaps even "Olympia" will have ceased to trouble the souls of the moralists and be accepted as a dignified work of art by a venerated master.

Giorgione, in the throbbing blood-heat of the Italian Renaissance, looked at life through his own eyes instead of through the eyes of tradition, a rather dangerous proceeding in those days when tradition in art was bound up so closely with ecclesiastical formulæ. He went direct to nature for his models, as his idol Leonardo da Vinci was doing—only, Giorgione was a male, full of lust of life and animal love, and so, unlike the inverted Leonardo, he sought the naked bodies of young females as models instead of handsome boys.

By choosing the most beautiful girls he could find, Giorgione attained to "a degree of life, softness and harmony," says Vasari, "which caused all the more eminent artists to confess that he was born to infuse spirit into the forms of painting, and they admitted he copied the freshness of the living form more exactly than any other painter, not of Venice only, but of all other places."

A bastard like Leonardo, and like Leonardo the son of a peasant girl, Giorgione, continuing the parallel, had a cultured father who took a proper interest in his bringing up. Like Leonardo, still further, this illegitimate youth was incredibly handsome, and—luckily escaping Leonardo's taint—he was a successful lover and exuberantly happy in his loves.

Giorgione, in his thirty-fourth year, was at the height of his popularity as both man and artist, the darling of society's fast set, delighting his friends with his "admirable performance of music", as well as with his painting. He was at work on a figure he felt was to be his masterpiece—a Venus modeled somewhat after the ideal of the Cnidian Venus, only she was reclining and asleep. Like the Cnidian Venus she was modestly covered, her beautiful hand being substituted for the fig leaf.

Though Greek in ideal, this was to be no coldly classic Venus —she was to have in her arteries the warm blood of the lovely Italian girls, except that she was to be calm, as befitted even Venus when asleep.

Who was her model?

Vasari, so stingy with details in regard to this painter's physical life, does not say, but he furnishes a fruitful clew. Considering the character of the painter, and the identity of his art life with his love life, who else could she be but the favorite mistress of the moment?

"At this time," relates Vasari, "he fell in love with a lady, who returned his affection with equal warmth, and they were immeasurably devoted to each other. But in the year 1511 it happened that the lady was attacked with the plague, when Giorgione also, not aware of this circumstance and continuing his accustomed visits, was also infected with the disease, and that with so much violence that in a very short time he passed to another life."

The figure of Venus was finished—soft, voluptuous, evanescently sensual like the mistress who had given him the fevered kiss of death. But the picture was not done, and Titian, his disciple and friend, carried out the design to completion, putting in the landscape.

Later gossip altered the story. It was alleged that this last, most beloved of Giorgione's many mistresses had proven unfaithful and had deserted him for his friend Morto da Feltre, and that the painter died of a broken heart. But the savants, patiently searching the records, find him actually to have succumbed to the plague, and so accept Vasari's story.

Her name is lost. We know who kissed Raphael to death, and who Gauguin, but Giorgione's sweet assassin has covered her trail.

But presently we'll venture a guess—let's look now at his friend Titian's models and mistresses.

Giorgione's Venus asleep preyed on his disciple's mind. Twenty-seven years after the death of his friend, Titian woke her up. But Titian's Venus is less innocent, less idealized than Giorgione's—not frankly a harlot like "Olympia"—but a high-grade courtezan like the "Maja Desnuda" of Goya. Both Goya's Maja and Titian's Venus belong intimately to our story. Manet knew them both and had both in mind as well as Giorgione's Venus when he painted his "Olympia".

"La Bella di Titiano" we know definitely was the model for "Venus Reposing"—the awakened Venus.

Biographers of Titian from Vasari down dodge the responsibility of penetrating definitely the incognito of "La Bella di Titiano", but so transparent is the disguise and so significant the hints at "a young and beautiful woman dear to the Duke of Urbino" that there seems no good reason longer to hesitate to name her as Eleonora Gonzaga, a lively beauty of Mantua, who became eventually the Duchess of Urbino. Her lineage was comparable with his, she being of the ancient house of the Gonzagas, of which her brother, the Duke of Mantua, was head.

The Gonzagas had taken up Titian as early as 1523, becoming his most influential patrons. In 1530, shortly after the death of Titian's wife, the painter produced a ravishingly beautiful nude "Venus Anadyomene", perhaps the nearest guess that has ever

been made with paint to the lost masterpiece of Apelles. In 1538 came "Venus Reposing", certainly from the same model, with a figure more mature, however, than that of the girl Venus of 1530.

In this period of eight years, Eleonora Gonzaga had married and lost the picturesque Duke of Urbino. He had begun his public career at seventeen by murdering the unfaithful lover of his sister, and at thirty he had spitted no less than a Cardinal on his sword in a brawl. Many and light were his conquests, among them Eleonora, whom he brought to Venice, however, in 1536 as his wedded bride. In 1537, at Urbino, Titian renewed his friendship with Eleonora and became equally a favorite with the Duke, so much so that he painted their portraits—the most important commissions of this year. Scarcely were the portraits finished when the Duke died of poisoning administered by one of his many powerful enemies, and Eleonora was left a widow.

Within a few months thereafter Titian painted "Venus Reposing". Her head is the head of the portrait of Eleonora, and her head and body the head and body of "Venus Anadyomene" grown more mature. Also the identity of all these with the acknowledged portrait known as "La Bella di Titiano" is unmistakable.

The discreet references to a beloved mistress of the Duke of Urbino also hint that "La Bella" was likewise Titian's mistress, though the chances are the powerful Duke did not permit so

lowly a rival simultaneously. It may be that a very complete discretion prevented Titian from also gracing the sword ornamented with the blood of a faithless lover and the blood of a Cardinal.

The Gonzagas as a family may have been as liberal minded as was Eleonora herself. For they owned a "Magdalene" painted by Titian the same year he did "Venus Anadyomene", and while not so completely nude, the Magdalene is draped only with her luxuriant hair, revealing her round breasts and all the other charms of her torso. The "Magdalene" is unmistakably a portrait of Eleonora. Was she already "La Bella di Titiano"?

Eleonora Gonzaga is described as "a woman of perfect shape but slender figure, with fine-cut features and glancing eyes shaded by long and dark lashes". The word picture of the newly widowed Duchess of Urbino is certainly not at variance with "Venus Reposing".

Eleonora likewise appears as the nude model for another very famous picture, the "Danaë" in the National Museum at Naples, painted in 1545—a lapse of time almost equal to that between the "Venus Anadyomene" and the "Reposing Venus"—and with a still further maturity, the slender body now having grown plumper, but still retaining its beauty and with its lines still recognizable.

This seems to have been her swan song—to the clink of the gold of Jupiter. That same year another nude model made her advent—Lavinia, the daughter of Titian!

Lavinia is the Venus of "Venus and Cupid", which hangs in the Uffizi not far from the "Reposing Venus".

The daughter of Titian was also to become the Danaë of several repetitions of the last picture for which Eleonora posed. Their bodies were strikingly similar, and they sometimes held their mouths slightly open in the same peculiar, heavy way. (Compare, for this peculiarity, the "Magdalene" of 1530, who was Eleonora, with the "Salome" of 1550, who was Lavinia.)

So strikingly alike are they, indeed, that they suggest mother and daughter—but I find no hint anywhere in the biographies that the maternity of Lavinia ever was questioned. Our guess is not impossible, however. Titian's household was irregular. A former model, Cecilia, passed as his wife, but there is no certainty there was a marriage. There was a boy older by more than a dozen years than Lavinia, frankly acknowledged to have been born out of wedlock. Lavinia made her advent about the time Titian and Cecilia set up their establishment together. Lavinia's resemblance to the portraits of Eleonora is much stronger than to those of Cecilia—Eleonora's station in life was such as to make advisable the concealment of any little accident of love.

Just as there is no record of the marriage of Cecilia, so there is no record of her death, but by 1530, Titian's "wife" had passed out of the picture, and after a brief reign in the household of the painter's sister Orsa, we find Lavinia assuming charge.

Lavinia seems never to have left her father's household, though

VENUS REPOSING – *TITIAN* UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE

*The model was Eleonora Gonzaga, mistress of the Duke of Urbino, and probably of Titian, too*

she married in late maturity, nor ever to have discontinued her services as his model. She posed frankly for him in the nude for his Venuses, Dianas, Andromedas, Danaës or whatever else was in his scheme of creation.

This delicate relationship of father and daughter seems not to have been uncommon in Renaissance days. (Indeed, I am told of a case in the United States at the present time.) Titian's first mistress and model, Violante, seems to have posed nude in the studio of her father, Palma Vecchio, where Titian, a youth, was learning the fundamentals of his art. Violante and her two sisters appear as their father's "Three Graces".

Lavinia, it appears, served Titian as a model from her infancy, when her tiny body was transformed easily into a Christ child, and through all her young girlhood when he needed either a nude boy or girl. As she grew into maturity, neither he nor Lavinia may ever have come to any awkward consciousness that her body was no longer privileged.

A curious confusion occurs in the naming of a painting by Titian, now lost, but preserved in an etched copy by Van Dyck. "Titian and His Daughter", the plate is called in some of the catalogues—"Titian and His Mistress", in others.

The confusion has suggested incest, and while there is no necessity of reading that charge into it, the suggestion easily arises in a period when a Pope, Alexander VI, is accused of undue familiarity with his daughter, Lucrezia Borgia—and Lucrezia was a friend

of Titian's. Titian's other friend, Aretino, moreover, was full of tales of scandal of the French court—how Catherine de Medici was mistress of her son King Henry, and how another son, Charles, had for favorite his sister, Marguerite. It was a smart sin in those days.

Lavinia and Eleonora are fairly easily traced through the mature art life of Titian, both because he left acknowledged portraits of them and went to no pains to alter their features when he painted them nude and because tradition bears out easily the evidence that is plain in the pictures.

Less certainly can we identify the mistress-models that preceded the advent of "La Bella di Titiano". Four beautiful Italian young women fix our attention in the confused mass of rumor and speculation—one of whom may be, also, the mistress of Giorgione, who gave that young painter the kiss of death. Titian and Giorgione were as close as brothers in those youthful days, and it is not improbable they shared their models—and occasionally their mistresses.

The quartet are Violante, daughter of Palma Vecchio, Titian's teacher; Cecilia, of uncertain origin, who became Titian's wife, or, at any rate, his household companion; Lucrezia Borgia, living a quiet and decent life at this period as the wife of Alfonso, Duke of Ferrara, away from the Rome she had helped paint so scarlet, and Laura di Dianti, this same Duke's current mistress.

All have been put forward as claimants for the honor of having

posed for the famous gauze-clad "Flora" in the Uffizi, where already we have noted hanging the nude Eleonora and the nude Lavinia. Whoever it was that posed for "Flora" appears also as model for a Venus of Cnidian pose, the central figure of "The Worship of Venus", a picture wherein Titian still displays signs of adolescent immaturity; as the voluptuous nude "Bacchanale" in the Prado, and as the very-much-discussed "Lady at Her Toilet" in the Louvre, of which there is a more naked version in a private collection in America.

Violante, first to claim attention, is the most legendary. Some of the biographers even deny her existence—in so far, at least, as she has been identified as Palma Vecchio's daughter. They deny that Titian's master had a daughter—which sends also the other two poor little Graces of his picture we have mentioned frantically in search of a father.

Other biographers, by way of making up for the slight, dole out honors with lavish profusion to Violante. They identify her as "Flora", the "Lady at Her Toilet", and most of the other young women Titian painted until the advent of "La Bella".

However, some time during this early period of production, Titian became intensely interested in another lovely girl, Cecilia, by some accounts daughter of a barber of Titian's native Cadore —by other accounts of gentler birth, belonging to an old Venetian family.

Cecilia certainly posed for him, and, about 1512, certainly bore

him a son. Titian then was 35, long away from the studio of Violante's father, and for the past seven years under the influence of Giorgione, whom he worshipped enthusiastically, though Giorgione was a year his junior.

This year, 1512, is the year also of the first of Titian's greatest pictures, "Sacred and Profane Love". By some accounts, Titian married Cecilia this year shortly after the birth of their boy. By other accounts, the marriage didn't take place until 1525, when there is mentioned "a son about twelve years old", and by still other accounts, there was no marriage at all.

A theory suggests itself to account for "Sacred and Profane Love". May not one of the models be Violante in process of being discarded, and the other Cecilia? And may not the baby between them be Cecilia's new-born son? It is no unusual experience for a bachelor father to be proud of having arranged to bring a man child into the world. He may have complimented Cecilia on the sacredness of her motherhood, even though he didn't find it convenient to marry her, and then let her worry about him for another dozen years or to the day of her death.

The speculation assumes rather a lot of forbearance on the part of both Violante and Cecilia to consent to pose in the same picture under such trying circumstances. But then we don't know just how persuasive and masterful a man was Titian.

What little evidence there is favors the early dismissal of Violante from Titian's model dais—she may even have been just a

VENUS AND CUPID – *VELASQUEZ* NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

*The model may have been Olympia Panfili, niece of Pope Innocent X*

studio calf-love, forgotten lightly when the young painter sallied forth into the world. Her importance as Palma Vecchio's daughter is an argument in the other direction. However, by 1512, Cecilia, as mother of his son, had a claim on Titian, and her chances to be considered as "Flora" are held superior by certain of the learned authorities.

The theory that either Lucrezia Borgia or Laura di Dianti was Titian's favorite model at this period, posing both nude and clothed, concerns not so much "Flora" as it does "The Lady at Her Toilet", although the discussion comes ultimately to the same thing, since it is obviously the Flora of the Uffizi who is combing her hair in the Louvre.

A fully-clothed, bearded man stands behind "The Lady at Her Toilet", rapturously enjoying not only her luxuriant hair, but also the charms of her shoulders and her bosom. Tradition would have it that the man is Duke Alfonso.

But the girl is too young to be the mature Lucrezia, unless Titian was engaged in some outrageous flattery—a flattery repeated, moreover, in "Flora", where it could have no meaning in relationship with the Duke, and where it would seem unnecessary, and in "Bacchanale", where it would be idiotic. Titian might have done the best he could for his powerful friends in "The Lady at Her Toilet", but he certainly would not have crucified himself mis-painting Lucrezia Borgia as "Flora" or "Bacchanale".

Lucrezia Borgia, I think, may be dismissed summarily, and the

legend of her having been a model for Titian ascribed to confusion with the fact that she was Titian's friend and sat at least once to him for her portrait.

This would pave the way for the girl Laura as "The Lady at Her Toilet", engaged in winding her curls around the Duke's heart.

The theory is tempting—particularly so, since if Laura indeed were "Flora", then she might be also the "Sleeping Venus" of Giorgione, coming into being at this same period. Giorgione's Venus is not unlike "The Lady at Her Toilet" in face and general contour. If Laura di Dianti were the model, she would fit exactly Vasari's mysterious "lady", presumably of quality, who kissed that divine painter's life away. Had Venus been a professional model posing for both Giorgione and Titian, like Violante or Cecilia, there would seem to be no reason for Vasari's air of mystery. His implication is that Giorgione's light of love was somebody of consequence, whose name it would not be discreet to mention—such, for instance, as Laura di Dianti, mistress of Duke Alfonso of Ferrara, whose wife, Lucrezia Borgia, took up much of his time, leaving many free hours on the hands of the art-loving Laura.

Tempting as is the Laura-Flora theory, however, it has vulnerable spots. Seven years after "The Lady at Her Toilet", Titian painted a very strong portrait of a woman, which is designated "Laura di Dianti". Even allowing for the increase in age, this

Laura is not the pretty nubile child combing her hair for the purpose of giving Duke Alfonso a thrill. This mature Laura, while beautiful, is decidedly hard-boiled.

But there is an ingenious answer—a ray of hope. The "Laura di Dianti" portrait is not Laura at all, say friends of the Laura-Flora theory, but Lucrezia Borgia, and as proof they point to the negro slave boy with her in the picture. Only Princesses in rank and in wealth were permitted luxuries like negro slave boys in those days, and Lucrezia was a Princess of the Borgias as well as a humbler Duchess of Ferrara. This portrait was known originally as "The Duchess of Ferrara". Laura became Duchess when Lucrezia died. Posterity has got the Duchesses confused, say the theorists. (It is not indicated why Laura may not have inherited Lucrezia's slave as well as her husband.)

However, it seems certain that the portrait was painted about 1522 or 1523, and Lucrezia Borgia died in 1519. So "The Duchess of Ferrara", after all, may be the new Duchess—eliminating Laura as a possible model for "The Lady at Her Toilet".

As for the Duke in the picture, the painting once was known as "Titian and His Mistress" (not the picture of that title Van Dyck etched). Eliminating the Duke and substituting the painter, there is no longer necessity for either Laura or Lucrezia, and the girl may as well be Violante or Cecilia.

Titian lived to be ninety-nine years old, and then it took the plague to kill him. Moralists may speculate that if he hadn't been

painting a wicked nude when the pestilence swept down he might have escaped the wrath of God and lived to be a hundred.

In that long lifetime he painted myriads of female bodies unclothed. At thirty-five he was painting "Sacred and Profane Love" while his friend Giorgione was doing his "Sleeping Venus" that killed him. At ninety-nine he was still painting nudes, almost his last work being a stupid allegory, "Religion Succored by Spain", with a lusty naked female fitted into the scheme.

Many models and many mistresses may have been at his disposal, but the influence of the multitude was evanescent. His art was controlled principally by four superb forms—his studio mistress Violante, the mother of his children Cecilia, the high-born "La Bella Titiano", and his daughter Lavinia—possibly, too, "La Bella's" daughter.

"La Bella Titiano", I should judge by the fire and passion he put into her body, was the great love of his life. She corresponds in both rank and the feminine power to stimulate with Goya's "Duchess of Alba".

"La Bella" passes out of his life about 1545, when Titian is sixty-eight, and Lavinia takes her place. The passion henceforth is gone from his nudes, as it probably is from his blood. But he does them expertly still and with a skill that makes them live—witness the Danaës (all except the first one, which he painted from Eleonora), and a whole series of Venuses—"Venus and the Organist", "Venus and Cupid", and the like. These he does on com-

DANAE – *TITIAN* SPAULDING COLLECTION, CHICAGO

*For this type of nude, frequently repeated, Titian's daughter, Lavinia, was model*

mission. There are at least three versions of "Venus and the Organist"—three different young men (portraits of the purchasers) permitted to turn away from the keyboard and gaze rapturously on the naked charms of the Venus Lavinia. The patron's favorite dog, too, the old painter will allow in the presence of Venus.

Never, however, is there any fire. Once, in his extreme old age, there is an exception, "Nymph and Shepherd". The nymph is a Venus Callipyge. There is throbbing life-blood in her body. There is a legend that the high-born Irene de Spelimbourg, who came to Titian in his nineties to learn to paint, unclothed for his rapturous gaze her fair body, as model. But Titian painted a portrait of Irene. The nymph has not Irene's nose—her face resembles more Lavinia's.

Some new fire came from some source, however, into the old man. He was changing his style astonishingly. A little later there came a "Lucrezia", now in Vienna. She would not look out of place in a gallery of Daumiers. There are others of the same type. Was the old master going to pieces, or did he have prophetic vision of a marvelous age three centuries away—the age that was to culminate in Cézanne?

## V. OF GOYA'S FLAMING DUCHESS AND THE NUDE MAJA, FOSTER MOTHER OF OLYMPIA

GOYA's wife stayed dutifully at home, loved him despite his infidelities, and bore him twenty children.

The Duchess of Alba was Goya's mistress. She wickedly deceived her own jealous husband, stole Goya away from his family, and posed for him naked. She is the "Maja Nude", hanging immortally in the galleries of the Prado.

The world indolently forgets Señora Goya and her children—if the Duchess of Alba were stolen from the Prado, or if her beautiful, enticing, sinful body were slashed, there would be a great outcry heard round the world, and history would remember "Maja Nude" as it remembers the lost Venus of Apelles.

Goya is one of the magnificent stallions of art history. Lust of life, lust of women, lust of art—in all he was clothed with thunder, and when, like Job's war horse, he pawed the ground, not only did he rejoice in his strength, but scores of women rejoiced with him. Among them was the Queen of Spain herself, though Goya, like the horse, had pawed originally in the valley. For he

was of humble, obscure origin, the son of a small farmer. It was the strength of his lusts that brought him to quick distinction as a maker of portraits, gave him the most noble Duchess of Spain as avowed mistress, linked his name with the Queen's, and finally brought him immortality as a painter.

Handsome, talented, swaggering, a duelist and even entering the bull ring for sport, fond of the ladies and radiating a magnetism they could not resist, had they wanted to try, Goya rose rapidly to popularity in Madrid. Society opened its arms to him, as it is in the habit of doing to anyone who can vary the boredom, from poet to prize-fighter, and it wasn't long before he was a familiar figure in the most important salons. Several of the first ladies who took him to their board and to their hearts (if not to their beds) he immortalized in paint.

"But not all", says Hugh Stokes, his biographer. "Goya was a difficult man to persuade. He required delicate blandishments before he would grant an appointment.

" 'I had established an enviable scheme of life,' he wrote to Zapater. 'I refused to dance attendance in the ante-chambers of the great. If anyone wanted something from me he had to ask. I was much run after, but if the person was not of rank, or a friend, I worked for nobody.'

"Scandalous anecdotes were whispered concerning the painter and his fair sitters.

"A young lady of rank and fashion had vainly implored Goya

to exert his skill in transferring her beautiful features to canvas. Even her husband was not able to extract a favorable reply. One day husband and wife entered the artist's studio. Goya was alone. The Marquis had a sudden inspiration. Other means having proved useless he determined to use force. Rushing from the studio, he double-locked the door. Then, through the keyhole, he shouted his commands:

" 'Now, Goya, you are my prisoner. I shall not allow you to come out until you have painted the portrait of the Marquesa. And I give you two hours!'

"He left them. The lady was as gracious as she was beautiful, says the narrator of this story. When the Marquis returned the canvas stood on the easel, a marvelous *chef-d'œuvre.*

" 'Ah, Marquis,' cried Goya maliciously, 'how can one refuse to do as you wish?'

" 'Quite right,' replied the rash husband. 'I am delighted with the result of my violence.' "

So was the lady. She visited the painter thereafter many times when her husband was not along. Once when the Marquis was about to take her away from Madrid on official business of his, to be gone some time, she appealed to her lover to invent an excuse to keep her behind. Among other parts of her, her foot was naked. Goya picked up a brush and painted thereon a bruise so realistic that her husband, on seeing it, couldn't think of forcing her to

travel, and went his way alone. In "Los Caprichos", Goya pictured this husband as a solemn ass.

Goya seems to have fallen as easily out of love as he fell in; too amiable, however, to cause his lady loves unnecessary heart pains by cruel, abrupt desertion. He seems to have played an easy, familiar game even with the Queen, and he had the impudence to depict Her Highness in a most ludicrous pose in "Los Caprichos", her skirts flying above her head on a windy night, revealing her in her "panties"—a tame picture, it would be called in these days of riotous chorus girls and their flimsy "undies", but even now it would scarcely become the dignity of, say, the Queen of England.

But Goya didn't take so lightly his affair with Dona Maria Theresa, the Duchess of Alba. Her great wealth may have combined with her exalted position to awe him. (He had not yet begun his intrigue with the Queen, whose rank alone was more exalted than that of the female head of the old house of Alba.) Besides that, the Duchess was not only beautiful, but brilliant—and many a gallant man hesitates in the presence of a feminine intellect that penetrates to the depths of his own. The best of male brutes have in their makeup something of the cowardice of the bully.

Dona Maria's weakness was the bull-ring, and she was as sentimental about bull-fighters as some of our current female intel-

lectuals are about the heroes of the prize ring. The two current heroes in 1789 were Costillares and Romero, corresponding roughly to our Dempsey and Tunney, and the Duchess of Alba and her chief rival, the Duchess of Osuna, fought for them as ornaments of their salons so openly that Madrid chuckled. It may be male jealousy, but one of the historians of the period said the "despicable dissoluteness" of these bull-stabbers "was of public notoriety".

The fashionable Goya, never adverse to a little honest publicity, had done portraits of the two celebrities—portraits the Duchess of Alba found adorable. She had the heroes bring the artist along next time. It wasn't long before she transferred her adoration from the pictures to their painter. Goya, as related, was something of a bull-fighter in his way, too, and that added to his glamor. Now, Queen Maria Luisa was jealous of the Duchess, whose beauty she envied, and always entered into rivalry with her over anything she annexed, and that's how the Queen came in for her share of Goya's favors.

The intrigue with the Duchess of Alba presently became an open scandal, and it lasted for four years. The latter two were a fervent love life together on her estates in distant Andalusia, whither she was banished from Madrid by the Queen. Gossip whispered that jealousy over Goya was the reason for the decree of banishment. But, if so, the Queen gained little, for Goya departed in company with his Duchess and remained with her dur-

ing the whole period of banishment until she was recalled to the Court—because, again gossip whispers, that was the only way the Queen could get the painter back at her side.

During the four years of the intrigue, Goya painted at least a dozen portraits of his exalted mistress, besides the marvelous "Maja Nude" and the no less celebrated "Maja Clothed", which now hang side by side in the Prado. They belong to the early days of the liaison, before it became public property, and while the Duke was still interested in the virtue of his wife.

"The Duke," writes Madame Dieulafoy, in her chronicle of Aragon, "learning that his wife often went to Goya's studio, became suspicious. He bribed the artist's servants, and soon discovered that she posed for him in a Paradisaical costume which marvelously became her.

"Friends warned both artist and sitter that the Duke was openly swearing to interrupt the next sitting in a startling manner.

"The next day the Duke presented himself at the doors of the studio, accompanied by alguazils and police. The door was broken open, and the Duchess discovered correctly clothed, while the painter was busily engaged on the 'Maja Vestida'. During the night Goya had made an exact copy of the 'Maja Desnuda', so as to ensure that if the Duke had been given correct information concerning the pose he had been deceived with respect to the costume."

Emphatic denial is made by certain of Manet's critics of his

indebtedness to the "Maja Nude" for "Olympia", on the ground of chronology—a denial that long puzzled me, since the chronology seemed as correct as the debt appears obvious. Manet was frankly a Goya enthusiast, so frankly that he didn't pretend to cover his pilferings. He appropriated outright the general scheme of the Spaniard's "Episode of the Third of May, 1798" for his own "Execution of Maximilian", and he raided Goya extensively for bull-fight ideas.

The difficulty with respect to "Olympia" is that she was painted in 1863, while Duret, scrupulously honest as a biographer, is positive Manet did not visit Madrid until 1865.

A letter Baudelaire wrote his friend Felix Nadar, May 14, 1859 —four years before "Olympia" was painted—clears up the mystery:

"If you are an angel, go and flatter a person named Moreau, picture dealer, Rue Lafitte, Hotel Lafitte (I intend to court him on account of a study I am preparing upon Spanish painting), and try to obtain from this man permission to take a photograph of the 'Duchess of Alba' (absolutely Goya and absolutely authentic). The replicas (life-size) are in Spain, where Gautier has seen them. In one frame the Duchess is represented in national costume; in the other she is nude, in the same position, on her back. The triviality of the pose adds to the charm of the pictures. If I ever used your slang I might say the Duchess is a bizarre woman, with a wicked look. . . . If you were a very wealthy angel I

LA MAJA DESNUDA – *GOYA* PRADO, MADRID

*The model was Goya's noble mistress, the Duchess of Alba*

LA MAJA VESTIDA – *GOYA* PRADO, MADRID

*The Duchess of Alba clothed*

would advise you to buy these pictures, for the occasion will not repeat itself. . . . The man who owns them is asking two thousand four hundred francs. It is little enough in the opinion of an amateur, mad over Spanish painting, but it is enormous to what the dealer has paid for them. He admitted to me that he bought them from Goya's son, who had become extraordinarily embarrassed."

For Baudelaire to see and become enthusiastic over these pictures meant for his bosom friend, Edouard Manet, to see them, too. Thus, in a very impressionable period of Manet's art life, there was under his nose in Paris either the original "Maja Nude" or a forgery so good as to deceive two excellent critics, Gautier and Baudelaire. Four years later, "Olympia" came into being. It is incredible that the suggestion of her life did not come in the shop of the bargain-driving picture dealer, Moreau.

"Despite the enthusiasm of Gautier and Baudelaire," thinks Mr. Stokes, "these canvases must have been copies, and probably formed part of the collection of forgeries which Matheron tells us were offered for sale at this time in Paris and then withdrawn. The originals have recently been transferred to the Prado" (Mr. Stokes is writing in 1913) "from the Academy of St. Ferdinand, where for years they remained imprisoned in a *cabinet noir,* only to be seen by the privileged few with the special permission of the custodian. One Spanish monarch had insisted on their seclusion, and would not even allow the adult members of his family to

admire the beauties of the 'Maja Vestida' and the 'Maja Desnuda'."

Baudelaire did not forget the Duchess of Alba any more than did Manet. When the poet was on his deathbed in 1866 (this was a year after Manet's return from Spain) "the chief adornment of the walls of his room," relates Stokes, "was a couple of canvases by his friend Manet. One was a copy of a portrait of the Duchess of Alba, and her pale face gazed upon his fevered bed as the dying poet gasped his last sigh."

After their return from Andalusia to the Court of the jealous Queen of Spain, the romance between Goya and his Duchess cooled. All sorts of guesses have been hazarded—that Goya fell weakly for the blandishments of the Queen; that Dona Maria Theresa began to see herself as others were seeing her, and remembered she was Duchess of Alba; that Goya, who had undergone a severe illness, became prematurely old and no longer interested the worshipper of bull-fighters; that—and this seems most probable—their love wore itself out by too much indulgence, just as love does in marriage.

Anyhow, the break was decisive. Goya was unkind enough to poke fun, in "Los Caprichos", at her who had been his one mighty inspiration. There was malice in his fun.

Again the Duchess was exiled, at another caprice of the Queen's. This time Goya did not go with her. She died three years later, in the summer of 1802. Poisoning was suspected—her physician

and some of her confidential attendants were imprisoned. Dark hints are made in contemporary journals relating the mystery of her death: "She was very beautiful, popular, and by attracting the best society was an object of jealousy to one who is all-powerful."

Her estates were sequestered, and her pictures were seized and sold by the crown.

Among these pictures was the famous "Venus and Cupid" of Velasquez, the only nude painted by the son-in-law of the Commissioner of the Holy Inquisition. It went to England, and now hangs in the National Gallery.

She who posed for "La Maja", most triumphant of all the Spanish nudes, was thus, in the period of her romantic love life, owner of "La Maja's" closest rival. Who knows but the contemplation of the "Venus" of Velasquez by Goya and his mistress induced the Duchess to discard her clothing and challenge her artist to make of her an even more thrilling Venus than the old master had done?

"The Venus and Cupid" of Velasquez, like "La Maja Desnuda", was painted in secret, but for a different reason. The Spanish Inquisition would stand for no nudes—prescribed, indeed, what clothing the Virgin and the female saints should wear. The harmless, sweet Murillo even got into trouble for revealing that the Madonna had toes; and everything the mysterious El Greco, working out his distortions in Toledo, produced was viewed askance.

The Grand Inquisitor was Pacheco, himself something of a painter and consequently knowing all there was to know about art, just as he knew thoroughly the morals and the ideals of Christ and his Mother and their retinue. He had the impertinence to visit El Greco personally at least twice, and question him closely about what he meant by his curious elongations. Fortunately Pacheco was as ignorant as a museum curator about what constitutes art; El Greco was quick-witted and so escaped the stake.

Velasquez was in a position at once precarious and safe. His wife was Juana, daughter of the Inquisitor. Moreover, Velasquez had brains enough to flatter the dangerous, dull pedant and to call him "master" as well as "father". It is recorded Pacheco was extremely fond of his son-in-law. As long as Velasquez committed no overt art act in public he was in no such danger as was his great rival in Toledo.

How and under what circumstances Velasquez committed the overt act—that is to say, painted his "Venus"—is subject for speculation. But it is pretty certain she came into being after the lusty heathen, Rubens, visited the Spanish court and informed the poor devil of genius, slaving away for King Philip, that there was something in the world beyond the confines of Madrid and the jurisdiction of the Grand Inquisitor.

Velasquez visited Italy. There is a legend that while in Rome, doing a portrait of Pope Innocent X, he painted also a very daring and dazzling picture of "the too noted Olympia Panfili, the niece

TORS ONIX – *BRANCUSI* PHOTO COURTESY ARTS CLUB OF CHICAGO

*Happy guess by a modern sculptor of the beauty of the Venus Callipyge*

of the Pope"—"niece", of course, meant any pretty female a Pope desired to have near him—a daughter sometimes, sometimes a mistress.

This portrait of Olympia Panfili is lost. Wouldn't it be a coincidence too good to happen if Velasquez's nude Venus is she—if this Olympia, working in the souls of Goya and his Duchess, resulted in the "Maja Desnuda", who, in turn, helped so materially to inspire the Olympia of Manet?

The Duchess of Alba was a super-creature. Not only did she hold Goya captive, but it is recorded Goya's wife was not jealous of her.

Goya's wife was Josefa Bayeu. She was of an artist family, but no artist herself. She had a neck like the Venus of Milo. Goya married her not long after he had tried to steal a young nun from a convent in Rome, escaping death and further formal art education on condition he leave Italy forever. Josefa, like the nun, was a love incident—and she seems to have realized it. Soon he was in pursuit of the next. But he always came back to her—often enough, at any rate, to keep her perpetually pregnant. She died in 1804, two years after the Duchess of Alba. Josefa had mourned the death of the Duchess.

Goya did Josefa's portrait, too—the year they were married, 1775. It is in the Prado. Nobody thinks of looking for it. In death she is eclipsed as in life by "Maja Desnuda".

## VI. OF THE GAUDY FLUTTERINGS OF THE OLYMPIAN BUTTERFLY WHEN THE GODS WERE YOUNG

An Irish critic, Thomas Bodkin, speculating on the peculiar anger aroused by the name "Olympia" when Manet's picture was displayed in the Salon of 1865, ingeniously links up the painting with "La Dame aux Camélias", fresh as a Paris sensation.

"Many who saw the picture then must have associated the sitter with the Olympia described by Dumas *fils* as 'undoubtedly the type of the courtezan without shame', the 'blonde and thin' mistress with whom Armand Duval replaced Marguerite Gauthier.

"Dumas was not original in his choice of the name," Bodkin proceeds. "It had been used before, by many writers in many ages, to designate similar characters."

Olympia, to go back to origins, is, as we have already indicated, the feminine of Olympus, the mountain home of the Greek gods, and applied by extension to Zeus, the highest godhead. Olympia, then, became the proper designation of the wife of Zeus, the stately

Hera. She lent her name to the plain Olympia, "fairest spot of Greece", bordering the river Alpheus, and on this plain stood her temple.

But the awful majesty of Hera was not especially popular with the pleasure-loving Greeks. Annually sixteen noble women of Greece representing as many towns—Miss Athens, Miss Sparta, Miss Corinth, and the like—gathered at Olympia just prior to the famous games in honor of Zeus, who had also a temple on the plain, and wove a festal robe for the Olympian Hera.

Present also at the games was a certain goddess by the name of Aphrodite, younger and prettier than Hera, with a slenderer leg and a naughtier eye. As time went on, Miss Athens, Miss Sparta and Miss Corinth let their eyes wander toward Aphrodite while weaving the robe for Hera, while all the men, including Zeus himself, sometimes were caught looking vacantly beyond the athletes in the general direction of the feminine charmer.

Aphrodite stole the glory of Hera. She became the real Olympia. And it was her priestesses who finally broke down the rule that women might not look on the contests of the Olympian athletes. The devotees of Hera remained in the temple while the young men strove naked—but we find in the open air, mingling with the male spectators, the hetairæ, those fair courtezan associates of warriors and philosophers.

These priestesses of Aphrodite—these human Olympias—when the sculptors began recording female forms in marble, as they

were doing the bodies of the athletes, became their models, and those divine Greek Venuses that grace our museums are the fair and frail ancestors of Manet's priceless prostitute. Phryne is their queen. It was she who was transformed by the sculptor Praxiteles into the Cnidian Venus. Of her anon.

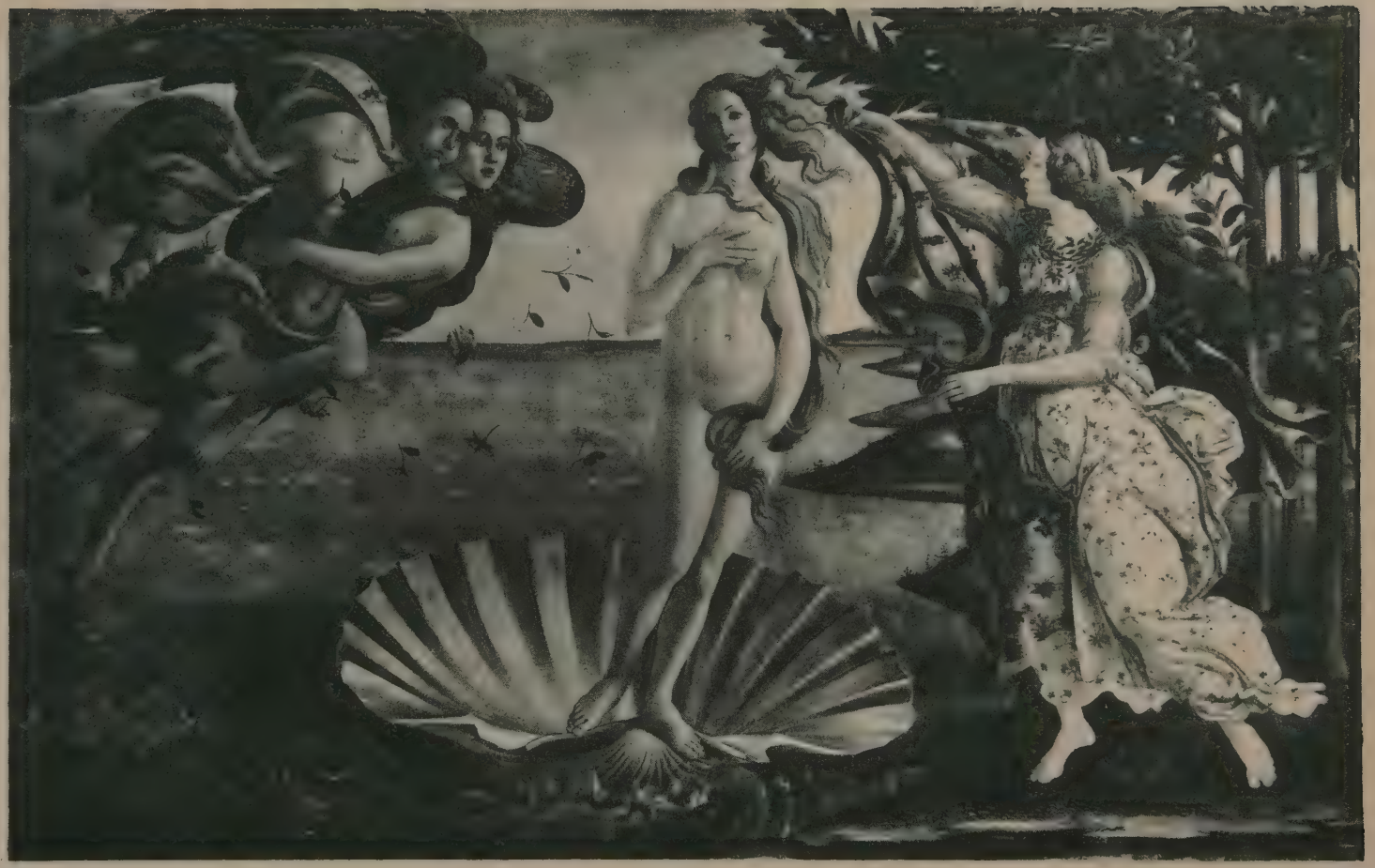
The sculptor Myron is revealed mistily to our gaze as art history dawns. Myron chiseled out of marble the "Discus Thrower", present in plaster in every museum in the universe. He seems to have been more or less officially the sculptor extraordinary to the athletes, and at least four of his winners graced for many centuries the temple of Zeus on the Olympian plain.

Myron studied action to the point of obsession—action, action, always action. The lithe-legged runners in the Olympiads and the throwers of weights with brawny arms filled his vision. To the beauty of the courtezans he was blind—the Olympias intrigued him not at all.

Then, Myron grew gray, and the lovely Lais made her advent.

"Hers was a marvelous beauty," observes the Frenchman, Pierre Dufour, chronicler of human impulses in history. "Her throat was perfect, and painters as well as sculptors, who wished to represent Venus in a worthy fashion, besought Lais to pose for the goddess.

"The sculptor Myron was admitted to look upon this adorable courtezan without veils; he was old, he had white hair and a grizzled beard, but he felt young again at the sight of Lais; he



BIRTH OF VENUS – *BOTTICELLI* UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE

*Botticelli's version of the lost masterpiece of Apelles, "The Birth of Venus". Simonetta, high-born mistress of Giuliano di Medici posed for Botticelli. Phryne posed for Apelles*

leaped to his feet, offering her all he owned to possess her for one night; she smiled, shrugged her shoulders and left.

"The next day Myron had had his hair and beard cut off; he was rouged and perfumed; he wore a scarlet robe and gilded cincture; he had a chain of gold on his throat and rings on all his fingers. He had himself brought into Lais' presence and declared to her, with a haughty toss of his head, that he was in love with her.

" 'My poor friend,' replied Lais, who had recognized him and was amused at the metamorphosis, 'you are asking me what I refused your father yesterday.' "

But if she would have none of the love of the sculptor of the Olympian heroes, she was not insensitive to the athletes themselves.

"She had to endure a refusal in her turn," continues our spicy historian, "when she fell in love with Eubates, whom she met at the Olympic games, where he had come to contend for a prize.

"He was a handsome and noble young man, who had left at Cyrene a wife whom he loved.

"Lais had no sooner glimpsed him than she made him a declaration of love, in terms so clear and pressing that Eubates was very embarrassed in replying to her. She besought him to become her guest and take up his abode in her house. He excused himself, saying he had need of all his strength in order to win the victory in the games.



Worcester Free Public Library

"She became more and more inflamed each instant and trembled lest the object of her passion should escape her.

" 'Swear to me,' she said, 'to take me back with you to Cyrene, if you are the victor.'

"To escape her persecution, he gave her his oath and thus preserved his fidelity to his own well-beloved; otherwise, he would have ended by succumbing to the all-powerful gaze of Lais.

"Eubates was the victor; Lais sent him a golden crown, but she learned shortly afterward that Eubates had returned to Cyrene.

" 'He has broken his oath,' she said to a friend of Eubates.

" 'He has kept it,' replied the friend, 'for he has taken back with him your portrait.'

"The wife of Eubates was so astonished at such fidelity and continence, when she learned what had passed, that she erected in his honor a statue to Minerva.

"Lais, to revenge herself, erected another, representing Eubates with the features of Narcissus."

Unhappily we are not informed whether Myron got the commission for either of these statues. We'd almost hazard a guess that he did gladly the portrait of Lais that Eubates carried back to Cyrene with him—one of those rapid sculptor's pencil sketches. It would have been sweet revenge on his tormentor.

Lais' little joke on "Daddy" Myron probably cost the ages a masterpiece—he might have done from her body a Venus that

would have persisted to eternity. It was reserved for her younger contemporary, Phryne, thus to dedicate her naked beauty, and for a more youthful rival of Myron's, and a greater sculptor, Praxiteles, to execute the commission.

Phryne, also, was to lend her creamy charms to the painter Apelles for his Venus arising out of the waves, though Lais was his usual model—indeed his physical property.

For Apelles had bought Lais, a slave, when only soft down was in her arm pits, revealed as she was carrying water from a well for her Peloponnesian master, who had got her from Sicily.

The arm and the boyish breast fascinated the painter, who divined what other charms were hidden under her loose clothing. He purchased her for model and mistress.

"The same day," it is related, "he took her to a feast, where his friends were astonished at seeing him accompanied by a young girl in place of a courtezan.

" 'Do not trouble yourselves about that,' he told them, 'do not be surprised; I shall train her so well that before three years have passed she will know her trade to perfection.'

"Apelles kept his word!"

That's the sort he was—the most renowned painter Greece produced. Today we'd call him all kinds of names and proceed against him under all sorts of laws.

His mistress, his slave and his "meal ticket"—for Apelles set her up in an establishment in Corinth, capital city of whoredom,

where she soon was coining drachmas—Lais lost something of her power to inspire his art, and it took the fresher Phryne, albeit no less a prostitute than herself, to give him the impulse to do his Venus.

Lais eventually secured her freedom, and, slave though she had been, became the proudest and most capricious of the courtezans. We have seen how she treated Myron. She refused ten thousand drachmas to spend a night with the orator Demosthenes, though she slept gratis with the filthy Diogenes, proud of the lice that prowled through his hair. Indeed such was the sway of the cynic over her that he boasted—and she didn't resent it: "I own Lais, but Lais doesn't own me!"

But her caprice sometimes traveled in more conventionally understandable channels, and she was fond of the wealthy, amiable and intellectual Aristippus.

She got a bright idea, and one of the best bedroom stories of ancient Greece transpired.

"This courtezan exercised such a sway over the two philosophers, Aristippus and Diogenes," Dufour retells the anecdote, "that she believed there was not a philosopher in the world who could resist her.

"She was defied to overcome the virtue of Xenocrates, and accepted the wager, thinking a disciple of Plato would not be more difficult to conquer than a disciple of Socrates.

"One night, half-clad, she wrapped herself in a veil and went

to knock on the door of Xenocrates; he opened the door and was astonished to see a woman come to his house.

"She told him that she had been pursued by thieves; her arms, her neck, her ears were laden with jewels which shone in the darkness.

"He thereupon consented to give her asylum till morning, and went back to his own bed, advising her to sleep upon a bench. But he was no sooner in his bed than Lais, showing herself in all the splendor of her beauty, placed herself at the philosopher's side. She approached him, she touched him, she forced herself between his arms, she attempted to animate him by caresses, which, however, left him cold and indifferent; then, she fell weeping with rage and redoubled her embraces, recoiling from no sort of provocation.

"Xenocrates did not budge.

"Finally, she leaped out of this insulting bed and hid her shame once more under her veil. She had lost her wager, and when the sum which she had lost was demanded of her, she said: 'I bet that I would render a man, not a statue, sensible.' "

Xenocrates, Eubates—when men didn't want Lais they didn't want her, and they could be callously brutal about it.

The sketches Apelles made of her long since have perished. The last of his pictures to go was his Venus, for which Phryne posed, and it crumbled to dust in Rome in Nero's time. Myron, at whom she mocked, left no record of her, unless the battered

Minerva with Marsyas—a lovely face—is she. Lesser sculptors, as well as the rival painters of Apelles, eagerly sought her for model, and it is possible hers is one or the other of those exquisite heads that are dug up now and then in Greece—or a disfigured torso, or a graceful, mutilated leg or arm.

It may be we have her in essence—but long after her beauty faded—in a tragic sculpture by the mighty modern, Rodin, called "The Old Courtezan". Rodin's ancient, sapless whore, with all the fire burnt to ashes in her shriveled body, is traced direct to "La Belle Heaulmière" of François Villon, but may not Villon have been heavily in debt to the poet Epicrates, who paints this woeful picture:

"Lais is idle and drunken. She comes to wander among the tables. To me, she is like one of those birds of prey which, in the strength of youth, hurl themselves from the summit of mountains and carry off young goats, but which, in old age, perch languidly on the pinnacles of temples, where they live, consumed by hunger, a sinister augury. Lais, in her springtime, was rich and superb. It was easier to approach the satrap Pharnabazus than her. But now, her winter is coming; the temple is fallen in ruins and opens easily; she stops the first comer to drink with him; a stater, a three-oboles piece, are a fortune to her. Young and old, she takes all the world; age has so softened her humor that she extends her hand for a few pieces of money."

She was seventy. She fell in love with a young Thessalian, who

repulsed her senile advances—as Xenocrates and Eubates had repulsed her when the blood was hot in her young lovely body. He retired to his native Thessaly, and ultimately was forced to flee for refuge into a temple of Venus. Thither the distracted old Bacchante followed him. The girl votaries of the goddess, indignant, stoned her to death before the very altar of Venus. The stones cruelly drew blood, which spattered the naked feet of the goddess to whom Lais had devoted the glorious, healthy years of her life from the day Apelles bought her.

Before examining the career of the immortal rival of Lais, that Phryne whose beauty has come down to us in the Venus de Medici, let us dispose of other fair ladies of Greece, noble and obscure, who revealed their hidden charms to the artists that the world might marvel.

There was the beautiful girl Campaspe, whom Alexander the Great showed naked to Apelles that he might paint her. Campaspe was a new acquisition, and her the conqueror "greatly loved, but seeing that Apelles also had lost his heart to her, gave her to him as a present, showing a magnanimity surely greater than his empire". Lucky "white slaver", was that man Apelles.

More remote in time and place, there is the legend of the Venus Callipyge, that noble statue of the goddess in Sicily so carved and set as to present to her adorers only a magnificent pair of loins.

Two sisters bathing, it is related, fell in dispute as to which was the better favored in this particular feature of her anatomy. A

young man passing, himself unseen, heard the dispute, viewed the rival charms, and presently came forth from bushes on the river bank and gave his decision in favor of the elder. The startled sisters fled. The young man told his brother the story. They came back, sought out the girls, wooed and married them. They all were people of prominence. The story became public, agitation was started to celebrate this parallel to the tale of the Judgment of Paris, and the Venus Callipyge was carved. The unknown sculptor is reported to have shown no partiality, blending the charms of the two sisters in the one composite statue.

The original Venus Callipyge is lost, but sculptors in all ages have sought to recapture her. Brancusi, in our own time, has succeeded.

Both the painters and the sculptors of Greece frankly chose the courtezan type for their models. Black was the native color of the hair of the women along the Mediterranean, but yellow somehow got the reputation of being more alluring, and the courtezans cultivated the arts of making themselves blondes. The sculptors tinted with gold the marble heads of the women they carved—the hair of the Cnidian Venus was of a soft yellow. That was Phryne's hair.

Whether the sculptors copied the courtezans originally, however, or whether the courtezans copied the sculptures, is worth considering. When Phidias was commissioned by Pericles to do the famous Athene of the Parthenon (Parthenon, "the dwelling

VENUS EMERGING FROM HER BATH – *CANOVA* PITTI PALACE, FLORENCE

*Modern version of the Cnidian Venus. Pauline Bonaparte, sister of the Emperor, posed nude for Canova for this figure*

place of the Virgin") the sculptor wanted to chisel her from a block of marble, but Pericles and popular opinion demanded ivory and gold. It may be the preciousness of the metal determined the hair of the goddesses the populace sought to honor—and that the prostitutes appropriated the costly glow.

Gossip is silent as to the model for the Athene of Phidias—he did her three times, and thrice she is draped, as are the other splendid female figures of the Parthenon.

It is not improbable, however, it seems to me, that she is Aspasia, that noble, high-born, intellectual courtezan, who became the wife of Pericles after she had been his mistress—and after she had been mistress, to his knowledge, to both Socrates and Alcibiades. Phidias, too, was of this intimate inner circle. When the enemies of Aspasia proceeded against her, now a wife, accusing her of being also "procuress to Pericles, receiving into her house the middle-class women of the city, with whom Pericles took his pleasure", Phidias and Anaxagoras were involved in the complaints. Pericles was able to save Aspasia from exile, but he could not prevent the decree of banishment against her friends, the sculptor and the philosopher.

Aspasia is the super-courtezan of all time. As a philosopher, she was ranked by the ancients alongside Socrates and Plato, and as a statesman she was the equal of Pericles. As a courtezan she had no superior in Athens, and she was moreover an efficient in-

structor in the art for younger women seeking to shine in that profession. Her beauty is proverbial, and her friend Phidias must have found in her all the traits for his Athene of the Parthenon, "the dwelling place of the Virgin". If the first, it is not the last time in the history of art of the laudation of the courtezan as the virgin.

In the proceedings against Phidias it was alleged, in addition to impiety and moral misconduct in the circle of Aspasia, that he stole gold allotted him for the hair of the Athene. He went into exile, and ultimately did another masterwork, the Zeus in the temple at Olympia. He seems to have died in prison, away from Athens.

Lamia, most famous of the courtezans in another cultural accomplishment, that of the flute player, ultimately became, like Aspasia, the ruler of Athens, as mistress of Demetrius. She came near wrecking his administration by her extravagant orgies. She died in the prime of her beauty and debauchery, and was apotheosized as the Venus Lamia. A temple was erected to her, and a statue But the Venus Lamia, like so many of the Greek marbles, is either lost or cannot be identified.

The courtezan Mania was famous for the charms she was endowed with by Venus Callipyge, and was eagerly sought as a model in the time of Sophocles. She had a passion, like Lais, for

the Olympic heroes, and was so extravagantly fond of the winning athletes that, on one occasion, she made appointments with two of them, Leontius and Antenor, for the same night. She ingeniously divided the time between them, without either learning of her duplicity.

Pythionice and Glycera, Athenian prostitutes, held simultaneously the fancy of the politician Harpalus. When Alexander of Macedonia created him governor of Babylon, he took the two girls with him.

Pythionice bore him a daughter, who became eventually the wife of Charicles, sculptor and architect. But, at the time of the wedding, Pythionice had long been dead, mysteriously poisoned. Harpalus entertained for her a tender memory, and he commissioned Charicles to do a monument to her in Athens—a temple and a statue. She was officially enrolled among the goddesses as Venus Pythionice, but the Athenians popularly called the temple "the prostitute's monument".

The other girl, Glycera, became chief of the harem of Harpalus (who had adopted oriental ways) when her Athenian rival died. When Harpalus, in turn, was gathered to his fathers, she returned to her Grecian home, where she became the polyandrous mistress of the painter Pausias and the poet Menander, who seem to have shared her with friendly understanding.

Pausias "painted the flowers which she wove into crowns and

garlands, endeavoring to imitate and equal the brilliancy of his models; he made a portrait of Glycera, depicted as seated and braiding a crown; this ravishing picture, which was called 'The Crown Braider', was brought to Rome and purchased by Lucullus, who esteemed it as much as all the other pictures of his collection."

"The Crown Braider", of course, passed long ago into the nothingness that is the fate of paint and canvas in the procession of the centuries. The Grecian girls who allied themselves with the sculptors had the better chance for immortality.

Glycera, however, had intelligence of an order high enough to make her a worthy companion of Menander, her other lover, and she became, in the memory of the Greeks, one of a quartet of brilliant hetairæ, along with Lais, Phryne and Aspasia.

So highly esteemed was the art of Zeuxis of Heracleia that, when he was commissioned to paint Helen of Troy for the temple of Hera at Croton, the citizens of that town voted him the privilege of selecting for models five of the most beautiful of their maidens. The resulting painting became renowned through Greece, and Zeuxis was further privileged to charge an admission fee to see it, and pocket the money. This artist is reported to have died laughing at a portrait of a woman he painted—most likely the president of the Croton art club.

Zeuxis, too, had his favorite models among the courtezans, and among the numerous favors these "immoral" women of Athens

received, that were not accorded the wives of citizens, was that of "applauding Phidias, Apelles, Praxiteles, and Zeuxis, after having furnished them inimitable models".

They could attend the Olympian games, too, and the oratorical contests, and the theatrical performances, and could ride in chariots through the streets "adorned like queens, brilliant in silk and gold, their breasts nude, their heads uncovered".

All these things, the wives of citizens were barred from doing. But they could bear children—a privilege denied the courtezans.

Hera ruled the wives—Aphrodite the prostitutes.

Aspasia, wisest of all Athenian women, who had experienced both states, forsook, after the death of Pericles, the nominal queen of Olympus, Hera, for the happier ruler of heaven and earth, Olympia Aphrodite.

## VII. OF THE MODEST COURTEZAN OF THE TOPAZ SKIN, WHO POSED FOR THE CNIDIAN VENUS AND SET THE OLYMPIAN TYPE

When the hetaira Phryne modestly covered with her beautiful hand the chief of her charms from the eager eye of the sculptor Praxiteles, she sent through him a thrill that his artist soul quickly responded to, and the Cnidian Venus was born.

That was the way of Phryne. Most famous of the lovely courtezans of Athens, she was also the most modest. Many men possessed her, but only in semi-darkness. To Praxiteles only and to the painter Apelles did she reveal in full light and completely disrobed the most glorious body, perhaps, Venus has permitted mortal woman to wear.

Venus was repaid—with interest. For the image of Phryne, in marble and in paint, kept vivid the memory of the goddess for a thousand years and another half thousand, and even yet we have her in much of her pristine loveliness in the Venus de Medici.

The statue by Praxiteles disappeared from Constantinople in

the darkness of the Middle Ages, hacked to fragments, it may be, by some fanatical Turk crazed to religious frenzy by the command of Mohammed against the making of graven images, or by some equally fanatical Christian, who found Venus an insult to the Virgin.

But the Roman craftsmen, alive to the art of Praxiteles, had made copies of the Cnidian Venus, some of which have come down to us in a fair state of preservation. Even more fortunately, there arose in Athens a sculptor of rugged genius whose name is forgotten, who took the Cnidian Venus and made a spirited variation—a variation that was saved for us accidentally, and which we know as the Venus de Medici. The Medici Venus is even more modest than the Venus of Praxiteles. For, with her other hand she hides a breast, which Phryne left exposed.

It is in the Medician Venus, perhaps, rather than in copies and restorations of the Cnidian Venus by inferior craftsmen, that we have preserved for eternity the charms of the most glorious harlot that ever walked the earth.

The glory of Phryne was not of posthumous growth, as are the glories of Saint Joan and the Virgin. The courtezan of Athens enjoyed goddesshood while still alive, and while in possession of all her charms.

She was of the cult of Venus, not only practically but mystically. Her body was of a peculiar color, which seems to have enhanced her beauty—a slight yellow, gleaming radiantly like a topaz. This

peculiarity gave her the name she has made immortal—her companions called her "phrya", a little yellow bush-frog. Her true name was Mnesarete.

Phryne became, because of her amazing beauty, stellar participant in the mysteries of Eleusis, where annually, in the semi-shaded portico of the temple, in the presence of vast crowds, she let fall her garments, stood like a statue for a fleeting moment, and then was dissolved from sight in foamy gauze veils of richest purple.

"At the fêtes of Neptune and Venus," relates the learned Dufour, "she also quitted her vestments on the steps of the temple and, with only her long ebony hair to cover the nudity of her beautiful body, which shone in the sun, she advanced toward the sea in the midst of the people, who parted with respect to let her pass, and who greeted her with a cry of unanimous enthusiasm. Phryne entered the waves to render homage to Neptune, and she came out like Venus at her birth; the multitude saw her for a moment on the sand, shaking off the salty waves which trickled down the length of her plump thighs; they saw her wringing out her dripping hair; and they shouted then that Venus had been born a second time.

"Following this instant of triumph, Phryne robed herself amid acclamations, and took hiding once more in an everyday obscurity. But the effect of this apparition was nothing less than prodigious, and the renown of the courtezan filled all mouths and ears. Each

VENUS DE MEDICI – *AFTER PRAXITELES* UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE

*Variation by an Athenian sculptor of the lost Cnidian Venus for which the Greek courtezan Phryne posed*

year, more and more curious ones attended the mysteries of Eleusis and the fêtes of Neptune and Venus with no other object than to catch a glimpse of Phryne."

It was at the exalted moment of her emerging from the waves that Apelles caught and fixed her immortally in his "Birth of Venus". For, though paint and canvas have crumbled to dust, the memory of her, as Apelles disclosed her, persists vividly. Painters of all ages have dreamed of restoring her. We have already encountered Titian's approximation in his "Venus Anadyomene". Another entrancing effort we shall meet in Botticelli's "Birth of Venus", in which another lovely prostitute, the high-born Simonetta, replaces Phryne.

The virtuous—and envious—women of Greece found the triumph of Phryne distasteful. Aided and abetted by males of the type we still have with us—pulpit orators, book and play censors, Y.M.C.A. secretaries, officials of the Lord's Day Alliance, Prohibition snoopers—they set out to "get" Phryne, no very difficult task, seeing that she was frankly a whore on all the days of the year she was not engaged in the mysteries.

Their proceedings were characteristic. They found a snooper, one Euthias, who "accused Phryne before the tribunal of the Heliastes of having profaned the majesty of the Eleusinian mysteries by parodying them, and of being constantly occupied with corrupting the most illustrious citizens of the republic by seducing them from the service of the fatherland".

It meant nothing to the learned tribunal—again the ancestral touch!—that this Euthias was proven to have been repulsed scornfully by Phryne when he had sought favors she dispensed so lavishly to men of both money and genius. Genius seems to have fascinated her more than money, despite her frank professionalism. She "loved the arts", it is recorded, and posed without payment for both Apelles and Praxiteles. She was intrigued, besides, by the minds of both poets and orators. Among these she distributed her favors gratis, in the semi-darkness.

When she saw the tribunal was composed of cool-blooded moralists insensible to her charms and not interested in the delinquencies of their snooper, Phryne became alarmed, for the accusation of Euthias, if sustained, meant death to her.

But—and here was a ray of hope—it also meant a police "clean-up" of Athens, for the police have not changed materially in twenty-five centuries, any more than have judges and snoopers, and the conviction of a prostitute like Phryne would mean that all the whores of Athens would have to scurry to cover till "an aroused public indignation" quieted down—as it always does in time. Aroused public indignations don't change, either, with the progression of the centuries.

Phryne had a friend, Hyperides, the orator, but he wasn't hers exclusively—Myrrhine and Bacchis had shares in him, too. Their claims, moreover, were fresher, for Phryne had been neglecting him of late, playing about elsewhere.

"Phryne besought these two hetairæ to bring pressure to bear on Hyperides to defend her against Euthias."

That is the elegant way Dufour expresses it. The chances are Phryne frightened her girl friends by pointing out what would happen to them, too, if she were convicted.

Hyperides, as good luck would have it, was fearless and despite recent slights on the part of Phryne, and despite his own danger of getting in bad with the Anti-Saloon League and the Lord's Day Alliance, thus blasting forever his political career, "was particularly interested in coming to the aid of Phryne, whom he had loved, and in coping with Euthias, whom he detested as the most cowardly of men.

"Phryne wept, wrapped in her veils and covering her face with her two ivory hands. Hyperides, much moved and greatly disturbed, stretched out his arms toward her to announce he would defend her; and when Euthias had formulated his accusations, through the medium of Aristogiton, Hyperides spoke, asserting that he was not a stranger to the cause, since Phryne had been his mistress, and imploring the judges to have pity on the pain he felt."

The Clarence Darrow touch—and the touch of that Delmas who first defended Harry Thaw and put Evelyn on the stand!

"His voice altered, his bosom filled with sighs, his eyes with tears, and still the tribunal, cold and silent, seemed not disposed to relent.

"Hyperides understood, all too well, the danger that threatened the accused; he burst into maledictions against Euthias, he proclaimed resolutely the innocence of the latter's victim, he recounted with complacency the almost religious rôle which Phryne alone had been able to bear in the mysteries of Eleusis.

"The Heliastes interrupted him; they were about to pronounce the fatal sentence.

"Then, Hyperides summoned Phryne and tore off her veils; he snatched away her tunic, invoking, with a sympathetic eloquence, the sacred rites of beauty to save this worthy priestess of Venus.

"The judges were moved, transported, at sight of so many charms; they believed they were looking at the goddess herself. Phryne was saved, and Hyperides bore her off in his arms."

There's more to the story.

"Hyperides had fallen more in love than ever at beholding once more that admirable beauty which had had more sway than his own eloquence over the judges; Phryne, for her part, as a recompense, became once more the mistress of her advocate, who turned traitor to Myrrhine.

"The latter sought to avenge herself by taking the side of Euthias and according to that sycophant all that Phryne had refused him. The courtezans were indignant that one of their number should dare to protest in such a manner against the sentence which had absolved Phryne; and Bacchis served as their spokesman when she wrote to the imprudent Myrrhine: 'You have ren-

dered yourself an object of aversion to all of us who are devoted to the service of Venus Benefactor.'"

She further alleged in her letter that Hyperides now "has a friend worthy of him and of his fine soul, and you—you have a lover of the sort you deserve!"

Bacchis was all for having the courtezans contribute to raise a statue of gold to the orator—a commission Praxiteles might have got, unless orator and sculptor were at daggers' points over the favors of the extravagantly happy Phryne, now desperately in love with Hyperides—but this move did not materialize.

Not only was he a hero of the hetairæ.

"Hyperides, by coming forward as the defender of the courtezan, had won for himself more honor and profit than by defending the first citizens of the republic; there was talk of nothing else throughout Greece but of his talent as an orator; the public was tireless in applauding the fine burst of eloquence which had constituted his peroration; presents and tributes of praise poured in on him from all sides, and, as the climax of his blessings, Phryne now belonged to him."

If this were a motion picture scenario, the order now would come to "cut!" and send the audience home happy. It would be an exquisite pleasure, also, to remember Phryne snug in the arms of her hero, when gazing at the beautiful, placid face of the Venus de Medici about to break into a smile.

Alas! History has an aggravating habit of going on babbling

when it has no business to, remaining silent at other times when we want it to talk.

The snooper Euthias wasn't happy. Love gone sour had impelled him to turn informer against Phryne; now he wanted to be back in her good graces. Also, he had managed to get into the way of making money—snoopers not infrequently grow rich, they're valuable tools.

It was the watchful friend Bacchis who scented what was up, and she wrote to Phryne:

"Euthias is a good deal more in love with you than Hyperides. The latter, by reason of the important service he rendered you, in giving you his protection and the aid of his eloquence in the most critical circumstances, seems to demand of you the greatest regard and to be conferring a favor on you by according you his caresses; whereas the passion of the other can only be irritated in the highest degree by the ill success of his odious enterprise. And so, do you wait for new advances on his part, for the most pressing solicitations; he will offer you gold in profusion."

Phryne was becoming a trifle bored with the heroic Hyperides. She flirted with her old enemy, as her friend suggested, and sure enough was rewarded abundantly with the yellow metal that so delights the heart of the gold-digger.

Also, the dignitaries of Athens were growing a bit ashamed of having fallen into the oratorical trap of Hyperides baited so skillfully with the nudity of this vixenish little Venus, and they prom-

ulgated a law gravely forbidding "advocates to employ any artifice in exciting the pity of judges, and forbidding the accused to appear in person before the judges until sentence had been pronounced".

So Phryne gave up her holy and risky job of posing as Venus in the Eleusinian mysteries and in the fêtes of Neptune and Venus, and settled down to the life of a plain business woman.

"She opened her bed and her table to gourmands and to libertines," gaining partisans from among the friends of her snooper as well as her champion, "winning subjects even in the bosom of the Areopagus", which had passed that law with the phrase aimed at herself. "A Senator of the Areopagus named Gryllion compromised himself to the point of becoming 'the courtezan's parasite', as Satyrus of Olinthe describes him."

Phryne's charms—and you have only to look at the dimpled loins of the Venus de Medici to understand—won her many and extravagant admirers. The wealth she acquired surpassed the riches of kings.

"When Alexander the Great had destroyed Thebes and overthrown its walls, Phryne recalled the fact that she had been born in Bœotia, and she proposed to the Thebans that she rebuild their city from her own funds, with the single condition that this inscription be engraved in her honor:

" 'Thebes Was Overthrown by Alexander and Rebuilt by Phryne.'

"The Thebans refused to immortalize an obloquy."

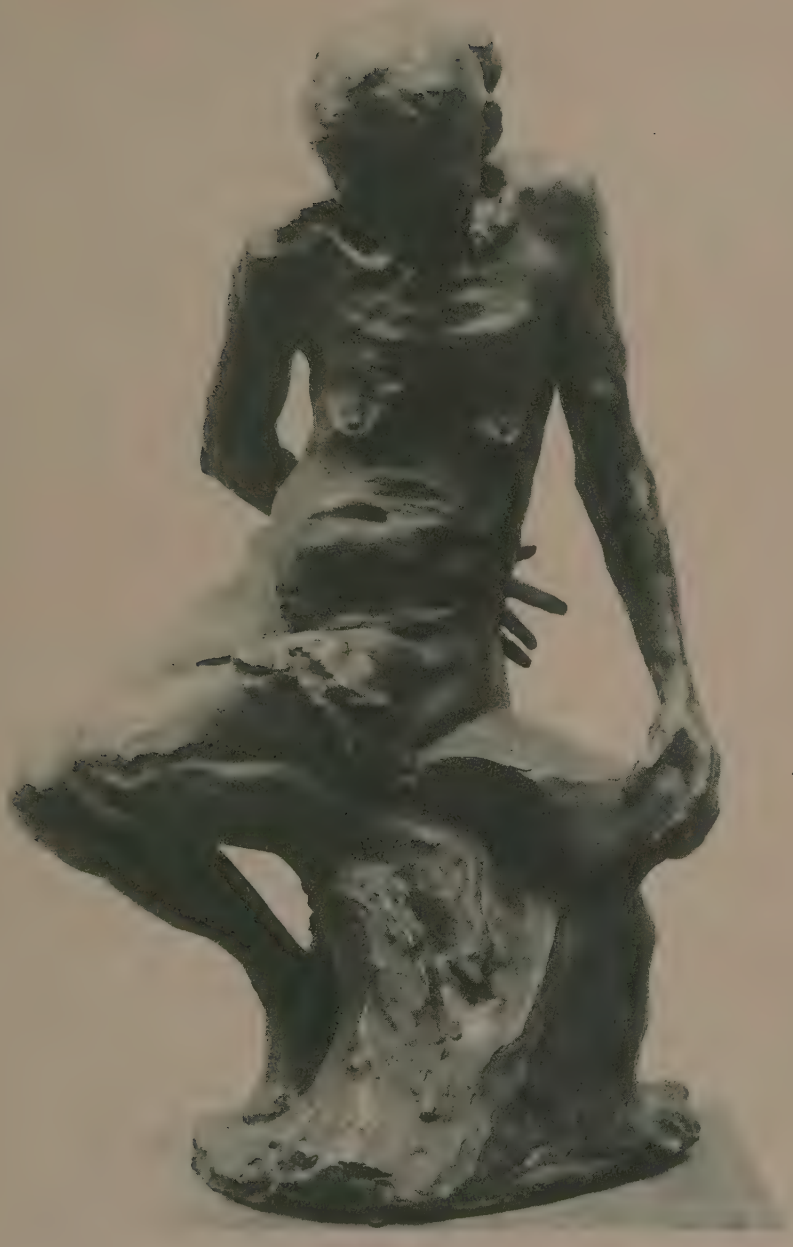
Many a modern community has been less finicky for far inferior gain, but let it pass.

She did, however, succeed in persuading the city of Corinth, which was broad-minded enough to be rather proud of its hetairæ —so liberal, indeed, that the courtezans, no matter where they were born, usually claimed Corinth as their native heath—to accept from her various public monuments.

And when she died, fuller of years than wrinkles, for she discovered some marvelous pomades which, if report is true, would dispense, if re-discovered, with our face-lifting doctors, a golden statue was erected to her in the temple of Diana of Ephesus. On the marble base were the inscriptions: "To Phryne, an Illustrious Woman of Thespia" and "This Statue Is the Work of Praxiteles". Long ago the golden figure disappeared in the melting pot of some conquering vandal, and the base was shattered.

Besides possessing the loveliest body recorded in the history of Greece, Phryne is credited by all the historians with a good heart, and with that curious generous extravagance so often found among successful prostitutes. She had not a brilliant mind, as the hetairæ go—they were the strangest manifestation of intellectual femininity in the history of the world, culminating in Aspasia and Sappho —but she had a very unusual feeling for art. This may have been due to extravagant praise early accorded her physical perfection.

"She regarded herself as the living image of the divine beauty,"



THE OLD COURTEZAN – *RODIN* METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, NEW YORK

*Inspired by Villon's "La Belle Heaulmière", this sculpture also illustrates the final phase of the Greek courtezan, Lais*

again quoting Dufour. "She paid homage to herself in the works of Apelles and Praxiteles; the one had modelled after her his Venus of Cnidus; the other had painted her as he had seen her at the fêtes of Neptune and Venus, coming forth from the waves.

"Both were her lovers, but Praxiteles won over his rival. Phryne demanded of him, as a souvenir of their love, the most beautiful statue which he had ever executed.

" 'Choose,' replied Praxiteles; but she requested a delay of several days in order to make her choice.

"In the interval, while Praxiteles was at her house, a slave covered with sweat came running up to cry that the studio of the sculptor was on fire.

" 'I am lost,' cried Praxiteles, 'if my Satyr and my Cupid are burned.'

" 'I choose the Cupid!' interrupted Phryne.

"It was a ruse she had thought up in order to learn the artist's opinion of his works.

"Afterwards, Phryne gave the masterpiece to her native city. Caligula caused it to be taken from Thespia and transported to Rome, but Claudius, in one of his prætorian decisions, ordered that the Cupid be restored to the Thespians 'in order to appease the Manes of Phryne', as the sentence read. The statue had barely been put back on its vacant pedestal when Nero once more had it brought to Rome, and it perished in the conflagration of that city, which was started by Nero himself."

Cupid may have been the masterpiece of Praxiteles up to the time Phryne played the little joke on him, but the life-size nude he made of his topaz goddess turned out to be "the work of the master most highly esteemed in ancient times".

We are leaving Dufour, and passing to the more formal histories of art—Pijoan, now, who cautiously confesses "many have believed that the face was that of Phryne, but we know that the statue was actually sold as a Venus". Maybe Venus came down from Olympus and posed in person—!

The Cnidian Venus is reputed the first absolute nude in classic Greece. "There had always been a certain prejudice in Greek art against the representation of the naked female form, so this Venus of Praxiteles is without precedent. It was probably carved," guesses Pijoan, "in the solitude of his workshop during his leisure hours."

The picture is a little too drab. We prefer to imagine him, not at his leisure, but breathless and excited—his topaz mistress revealing herself nude in the full light for him, and for him alone, and the two conspiring to do a daring thing—to promulgate a naked lady in marble. Not quite naked, Phryne teased him—she'd hide her chief charm with her little hand, like this.

"Hold it!" shouted Praxiteles.

And when the idea is used afresh and with genius it never fails of a sensation—Botticelli's Simonetta, Giorgione's sleeping Venus, Manet's "Olympia"—even "September Morn".

Though we deny Praxiteles did his Venus in any mood re-

sembling leisure, we are prepared to admit the solitude. Velasquez secretly painted his only nude in fear of the Spanish Inquisition, and Corot trembled lest his magnificent undraped females be seen and so jeopardize the sale of his forest trees.

"Up to this time the goddess of love had always been draped," says Pijoan. "This is the case of the Parthenon frieze, and Alcamenes always represented her as clothed, but as time goes on the tunic becomes more and more transparent. Praxiteles, however, catches her completely nude, just coming from her bath. Beside her is the jar of perfume, and she holds the folded robe which she is about to throw over her shoulders. We readily see that the subject was a mere excuse, such as the painters of the Italian Renaissance made of St. Sebastian, naked and pierced with arrows, in order to paint the nude youthful form and rosy skin with impunity."

That is the psychology we find all through the history of art. Nudity worth while, be it in painting or in sculpture, has a pelvic impulse in the artist, as well as a cranial.

Praxiteles, having duplicated Phryne in marble, now tinted lightly the counterfeit—"the eyes, lips and hair were softly colored, and the rest of the figure was covered with a creamy patina".

Emissaries came now from Cos and Cnidus to Athens, arriving simultaneously, "with the purpose of purchasing a Venus from the great interpreter of love. Those of Cos were given first choice of the two which he had for sale, and chose the draped one."

They knew what they were up against back home—what with seventy-year-old museum trustees, who had made their money in the wholesale grocery business, or butchering hogs, or sawing lumber, or trading in stocks and bonds.

"The Cnidians accepted the other, which was a nude figure, to their everlasting good fortune, for the art lovers of ancient times never tired of sailing to Cnidus to see this marvelous statue. Lucian speaks of the unbounded admiration which existed for this statue, saying: 'The temple which shelters it is quite open, so that the figure, carved, it is believed, under the direct inspiration of the goddess, can be seen from all sides.' "

So proud were the Cnidians of their Venus that they struck coins in her honor, and it is from these coins, crude as they are, that we know what she was like, and can identify certain Roman copies of her, as distinguished from innumerable variations.

"The original statue remained in Cnidus all through the Roman period. During the Middle Ages it was carried off to Constantinople, where it was long the pride of the collection of a wealthy lover of art," and then she disappeared, and with her the faithful portrait of the courtezan Phryne.

Praxiteles was gathered to his fathers about 340 B.C. After him arose in Greece an unknown sculptor of genius, who looked upon the Venus at Cnidus and also upon the painted Venus that Apelles had pictured emerging from the waves. He conceived the idea of improving on Praxiteles by endowing the Cnidian Venus with

DANAE – *REMBRANDT* HERMITAGE, LENINGRAD

*Portrait of the artist's wife, Saskia*

Apellesian attributes. The result is the Venus de Medici, a work of no mean genius, however inferior she may be to the lost Venus of Praxiteles. She varies from the Cnidian Venus "in that instead of being represented as coming from the bath with jar and mantle, she is supposed to have risen from the waves to account for her lack of drapery, and is accompanied by a Cupid and a dolphin".

From coins and Roman copies of the Cnidian Venus it is inferred, however, that if the Manes of Phryne ever is allowed a night out from the Stygian gloom to glide into the Uffizi gallery, she will not be too disappointed in the patrician face and the dimpled loins of her counterfeit, the Venus de Medici. Earth still treasures in marble the once "living image of the divine beauty".

## VIII. OF OLYMPIAS, MOTHER OF ALEXANDER, AND THE COMMERCE OF THE GODS WITH THEIR MAIDEN PRIESTESSES

"Visiting the isle of Samothrace, to be initiated into the mysteries of the Cabiri," relates the English biographer Hogarth, spiritedly following the classic accounts of the adventures of King Philip of Macedonia, "he met another royal novice, Olympias, daughter of a dead Epirote king and reputed of the Greek stem of Æacus.

"Her fierce, fantastic nature appealed to the Macedonian in the common excitement of the orgies, and as soon as might be he wedded the wild woman. . . .

"A votary of the Cabiric mysteries before marriage was open to more than suspicion, and Philip was rumored always to have doubted his own paternity of Alexander. . . .

"Men believed that portents marked her bridal night, and visions and strange dreams the early months of her pregnancy.

"And on a stormy night of October, 356, while the Ephesian fane of the Goddess of Asia was aflame, she bore Philip a son."

A fit advent into the world for a man child who was to lay it waste with fire and sword. When a spiritual leader was to appear, a prince of peace, the heavens were benignantly calm, and an extra star shone in the sky.

Philip's doubt as to the paternity of his son was afterward confirmed officially by Alexander himself, under guidance of his mother, the erstwhile temple prostitute Olympias—confirmed and made holy! No, Philip was not his father—instead, a god had visited his handmaiden in the temple—and the highest of the gods—Zeus himself.

But there was a scandal first.

"The legends of the serpent seen with Olympias, and the seal set thereafter on her womb; her affectation of divine relations, and that world-wide story of her seduction by an Egyptian astrologer, are so many popular improvements on the contemporary scandal which the Macedonian, Attalus, blurted out when he prayed tipsily for a legitimate heir to the throne of Philip, and received Alexander's drinking cup in his face."

The wine did not wash away the words that had fallen from the drunken tongue of the Macedonian noble. Philip was dead, violently, and, it was whispered, with the connivance of his queen. Alexander consulted his mother, and then he went on a long pilgrimage to the Oasis of Siwah, far out in the desert beyond the Nile valley, where stood the temple of Jupiter Ammon.

There Alexander learned that the Egyptian Zeus "was not only

his official but his fleshly father". The progenitor of all the Pharaohs, he was told by the oracle, was still looking upon the daughters of men and finding them fair. This Zeus a generation ago had disguised himself as the serpent which Attalus babbled about, and had visited Olympias and impregnated her with the present heroic consultant, whom he now loved above all his brood of heroes.

Whatever we may think of Jupiter's boast, Olympias, historically, became, when a nubile girl, a devotee of Venus in her temple on the rocky island of Samothrace in the Ægean. In the service of the goddess, she was expected to sell her physical favors to visiting men, like King Philip—and his predecessors.

"Those in this sacred enclosure," writes our friend Dufour of the temples of Venus scattered all through the islands of the Mediterranean—as standardized for sacred prostitution, as brothels for secular gain—"were the daughters of the best families of the country; and they entered into the service of the goddess for a longer or a shorter period of time in accordance with the vows of their parents. When the daughters came forth from the temple of Venus, leaving behind them on the altars all they had gained by the sweat of their bodies, they had no cause to blush at the trade they had taken for their own, nor did they lack for husbands, who went to the temple to receive information about the religious antecedents of the young priestesses. Those who had received the greatest number of strangers were the most sought after in marriage."

PROMETHEUS AND SEA NYMPH – *RODIN* RODIN MUSEUM, PARIS

*Originally entitled by Rodin "Christ and the Magdalene"*

That was the normal, noble devotion to the goddess in "the sacred days of old". By the time the Epirote king was ready to send his daughter Olympias to the sacred stews, ceremonies had degenerated somewhat. Instead of the girls submitting with pious faces to the male worshippers at the shrine of Venus, "songs, cries and dances" attended the rites, "and modesty, whose eyes and ears were no longer respected, fled wrapping herself in the folds of her robe".

The dark-eyed Epirote princess was the wildest of the wild, and when Philip claimed her as his own and took her away, she already carried in her belly, as she afterward confessed to Alexander, the future conqueror of the world—whether Jupiter Ammon's son, playing around far from his Egyptian desert, or the son of the Egyptian astrologer, who bought her favor with money she turned over to the goddess.

The priestesses, too, by this time had given up the old practice of accepting for the goddess only what the stranger was willing to pay, however small and mean the copper he squeezed. They were "permitted" by the officiating priests of the goddess to extort from the chance lover whatever amount they could. There developed keen rivalry in the sacred enclosure—not only in the pious interest of Venus, but through a natural vanity as to whose charms could command the biggest fee. It is not to be thought Olympias, madcap leader of the girls, was lax in this respect. If Jupiter Ammon was the father of Alexander, he doubtless paid

as much for the privilege as he gave Danaë, whom he visited as a shower of gold.

The legend of Jupiter and Olympias, naturally, did not escape the painters—and here is an "Olympia" made to Manet's order, not only in her psychology as a flaming prostitute but in her very name—for the "s" was dropped by the painters generally, who preferred the Latin to the Greek.

Perhaps the most famous of all the "Olympias" celebrating the amours of the mother of Alexander is the obscene painting by Giulio Romano—"Jupiter and Olympia", a fresco in the Ducal Palace, Mantua—a painting with which Manet must have been familiar, at least in reproduction, since it has been an erotic classic in France, ever since its introduction at the French court by Aretino, Romano's friend, and Titian's. Jupiter, in the Mantuan fresco, is only half a serpent, while Olympia is all woman, and her pose is not unlike that of Manet's harlot, except she is much perturbed by the presence of her exalted lover. Romano's Olympia wears, moreover, the armlet of the Cnidian Venus, which Manet was to clamp later on Victorine.

The sculptor Rodin, it is related, renamed a pair of beautiful marble nudes, male and female, passionately embracing, "Prometheus and a Sea Nymph", as a matter of propriety and acceptance of things as they are, whom he had intended to exhibit originally as "Christ and the Magdalene".

Frankness is not ours, as it was in the three or four centuries after the death of Augustus, when the physical facts of the Founder of the Faith and his family and friends were deemed proper matter for discussion and investigation.

In those old days it was possible to show the astonishing parallels between the impulses of Jove and Jehovah.

There was, for example, "The Gospel of Mary", eliminated by vote when the church fathers came to put together officially the New Testament. Scholars still argue as to whether it is not of equal authenticity with the gospels the fathers accepted.

In this gospel it is related how the little Jewish girl, Mary, at the age of three, was "brought to the temple of the Lord with offerings", and how "the parents having offered up their sacrifice, according to the custom of the law, and perfected their vow, left the Virgin with other virgins in the apartments of the temple, who were to be brought up there, and they returned home".

There she remained until she was fourteen, conversing daily with angels. Then "the high-priest made a public order, that all the virgins who had public settlements in the temple, and were come to this age, should return home, and, as they were now of a proper maturity, should, according to the custom of their country, endeavor to be married".

The other little girls "readily yielded obedience", but Mary refused, saying "that both she and her parents had devoted her

to the service of the Lord". The high-priest, however, secured her betrothal to a man much older than herself, named Joseph.

"And it came to pass, in a council of the priests, it was said, Let us make a new veil for the temple. And the high-priest said, Call together to me seven undefiled virgins of the tribe of David. And the servants went and brought them into the temple of the Lord, and the high-priest said unto them, Cast lots before me now, who of you shall spin the golden thread, who the blue, who the fine linen, and who the true purple. Then the high-priest knew Mary, that she was of the tribe of David; and he called her, and the true purple fell to her lot to spin, and she went away to her own house."

While at her spinning of the true purple, the angel Gabriel appeared to the little temple maiden and announced she was to give birth to a boy who "shall be called the Son of the Highest".

Joseph was not with her now, for "the usual ceremonies of betrothing being over, he returned to his own city of Bethlehem, to set his house in order, and make the needful provisions for the marriage. But the Virgin of the Lord, Mary, with seven other virgins of the same age, who had been weaned at the same time, and who had been appointed to attend her by the priest, returned to her parents' home in Galilee."

Presently, having set his house in order, Joseph "went from Judæa to Galilee, with intention to marry the Virgin who was betrothed to him; for it was now three months since she was

betrothed to him. At length it plainly appeared she was with child, and it could not be hid from Joseph: for going to the Virgin in a free manner, as one espoused, and talking familiarly with her, he perceived her to be with child. And thereupon began to be uneasy and doubtful, not knowing what course it would be best to take; for being a just man, he was not willing to expose her, nor defame her by the suspicion of being a whore, since he was a pious man. He purposed therefore privately to put an end to their agreement, and as privately to put her away."

The angel of the Lord appeared to him, however, and he became her protector, and the birth of Jesus transpired, as related in the canonical gospels.

Years afterward, this son of the temple maiden, of whom the high-priest had been so solicitous (gossip in other centuries said a priest named Ben Panther was the father of Jesus) was brought before Pontius Pilate for trial for his life. The evidence introduced is set out more fully and more frankly in the rejected "Gospel of Nicodemus" than in the four retained for the official instruction of the pious.

The most serious of the charges, as Nicodemus records the proceedings, was that the prisoner "was born through fornication, and is a conjurer".

"Then said Pilate to the Jews who affirmed him to be born through fornication, This your account is not true, seeing there was a betrothment, as they testify who are of your own nation."

The prosecuting priests, Annaas and Caiaphas, moved to set aside this testimony on the ground that the witnesses were not Jews, but "the children of pagans" and "followers of him".

Immediately stepped from the assemblage, however, a heroic dozen, who assured Pilate:

"We are not proselytes, but children of Jews, and speak the truth, and were present when Mary was betrothed."

Pilate, who didn't like the faces of the high priests anyhow, got sore at Caiaphas and Annaas for trying to put their lie over on him, and ordered them to withdraw while he consulted privately with these twelve.

"Why have the Jews a mind to kill Jesus? he asked them.

"They answered him, They are angry because he wrought cures on the sabbath day.

"Pilate said, Will they kill him for a good work?

"They said unto him, Yes, Sir.

"Then Pilate, filled with anger, went out of the hall, and said to the Jews, I call the whole world to witness that I find no fault in that man."

That's how far the high priests got with their conjuration and bastardy charges.

The mother of the martyr figured only incidentally in the early development of his religion, but presently she became of high consequence in his worship and in the art that worship inspired.

We are destined to encounter her again and again. Early in her

queenhood, the former modest handmaiden of the Jewish Jehovah is completely a foil for the priestesses of Venus, the Olympias. Later, she became transformed and took on some of their attributes—It was Raphael who translated "La Fornarina", his girl mistress, into the Sistine Madonna.

## IX. OF THE TWO THEODORAS WHO CONDEMNED OLYMPIA TO THE STYGIAN STERILITY OF THE DARK AGES

HAD Theodora, the courtezan, not reformed when she became the Empress of Justinian in Byzantium toward the middle of the sixth century, the Dark Ages might have been rendered a dusk of lighter shade, so far as art is concerned.

For there was already developing in the Eastern capital of the Roman Empire a fine flair for painting that needed only royal encouragement for a splendid flowering.

Christianity had passed through its first phases of the sterile symbolism the saints were trying to substitute for the pagan forms of voluptuous women in their temples of worship. The nimbus, indeed, was supplanting the sunny, sinful hair of Greek maidens, and faces of young girls were losing their smiling freshness in transformation into mournful madonnas.

But the old gods were not dead, and could have been jolted out of their final slumber. Borrowing the idea from Romanized Egypt, there were still painters who furtively pictured on a coffin lid the

LA FORNARINA – *RAPHAEL* BARBERINI GALLERY, ROME

*Portrait of Margherita Luti, the baker's daughter, mistress and favorite model of Raphael*

rosy features of the beloved within, looking forward to a happy resurrection. Then, too, a venturesome monk, dutifully illuminating a pious manuscript, would introduce a secular face—maybe a beloved sister, possibly a bright-eyed nun not completely satisfied with her vows. Sometimes he went so far as to give her blonde hair, the stamp of coquettish sin.

The embers were there—they needed to be blown ever so lightly by the breath of royal favor to burst into flame. Theodora might have been expected to supply the little puff—any of the mistresses of the Medici or the Borgias a few centuries later would have been glad of the chance.

But the most accomplished whore ever raised to royal eminence —and that is some distinction in a world that boasts Cleopatra and Messalina—reformed with sudden violence when she felt the crown pressed on her head, and became the most zealous reformer of her kind in history—and that, too, is quite a distinction in a world that has suffered from St. Paul.

Not only did Theodora gather together all her "fallen sisters" she could lay hands on and send them off to a magnificent prison-palace she built for them on the Bosphorous, where they could repent and prepare themselves for heaven (most of them were drowned trying to escape by swimming) but she and Justinian lay awake nights concocting all sorts of laws for the good of their people, beside which our modern prohibition and sabbath blue laws are exuberant liberty.

Art was stifled, and by the time another promising prostitute came into power in the Roman Empire—that other Theodora, the pornocrat, maker of Popes not only by decree but out of her lovely loins—St. Paul's Christianity had done its deadly work, and art was beyond the power of aid.

Theodora, the Empress of Justinian, comes down to us all but a saint in a Byzantine mosaic in the church of San Vitale at Ravenna; the other Theodora has been reconstructed for us in our own time by the satanic Felicien Rops in the etched plate known as "Pornokrates".

"The Empress is crossing the atrium where the sacred fountain flows," writes a learned, devout authority on Byzantine art of the Ravenna mosaic, "while one of her attendants holds aside the veil suspended at the door of the temple. Her costume is splendid; gold embroidery, representing the Adoration of the Kings, ornaments the skirt of her robe; jewels cover her chest; from her hair depends fringes of pearls and gems; a diadem encircles her aureoled head."

Compare this picture of Theodora with another from the pen of her contemporary historian Procopius:

"As soon as she arrived at the age of youth and was ready for the world, her mother put her on the stage. Forthwith she became a courtezan, and such as the ancient Greeks used to call a common one, at that: for she was not a flute or harp player, nor was she even trained to dance, but only gave her youth to anyone she

met, in utter abandonment. Her general favors included, of course, the actors in the theater; and in their productions she took part in the low comedy scenes. For she was very funny and a good mimic, and immediately became popular in this art. There was no shame in the girl, and no one ever saw her dismayed: no rôle was too scandalous for her to accept without a blush. . . . Often, in the theater, in the sight of all the people, she removed her costume and stood nude in their midst, except for a girdle about the groin: not that she was abashed at revealing that, too, to the audience, but because there was a law against appearing altogether naked on the stage, without at least this much of a fig-leaf."

There are many explicit details as to her amours, "and her name was a byword beyond that of other common wenches on the tongues of all men".

Justinian met her on her arrival in Constantinople after she had worked her way from Alexandria, plying her trade as courtezan, selling or giving her favors to everyone who asked, "as if the Devil were determined there be no land on earth that should not know the sins of Theodora".

But she was "fair of face and of very graceful, though small person; her complexion was moderately colorful, if somewhat pale; and her eyes were dazzling and vivacious".

A pagan immortality might have been hers in paint. Instead, as Empress, she preferred to become an aureoled saint in a mosaic.

The other Theodora also was of radiant beauty, and was, moreover, of patrician origin. Art was dead and forgotten—she bent her energies to the control of the Holy See, the one throbbing artery in the corpse of the Roman Empire.

She emerges secularly in Rome in the tenth century as the wife of a consul and the mistress of several men of might. Men, however, she used only as her tools, and, in order to enhance her power, she gathered about her a circle of courtezans as beautiful as herself, and as high of rank. Their lovers and hers she put in high places, and the puppet men danced when Theodora pulled the strings.

The Pope was hers—a dozen Popes were the creatures of herself and her no less accomplished daughter, another Theodora, during the fifty years the "Pornocracy" endured. These Popes were either the paramours or the sons of the two Theodoras.

The "Pornocracy" was a brilliant period of intrigue, and the world is poorer because Theodora concentrated her energies on politics instead of establishing a court for the arts, as the Papacy, after a few more centuries, was to do. There were models a-plenty —Theodora and her courtezans ruled by sex compulsion.

When Rops came to sum up the reign of the Pornocrats, he pictured a naked prostitute, stockinged and gartered in continental brothel style, blindfolded, driving a pig she holds in leash with gloved hands. On the pedestal he placed as ornaments little

SISTINE MADONNA – *RAPHAEL* DRESDEN GALLERY

*The Madonna is a portrait of Margherita, Raphael's mistress*

female nudes, labeled "Sculpture", "Music", "Poetry" and "Painting".

It was the midnight of the arts. Olympia was dormant; Pornokrates blind.

## X. OF RAPHAEL'S LOVELY MISTRESS, WHO BRIDGED THE GULF BETWEEN THE CNIDIAN OLYMPIA AND THE SISTINE MADONNA

"LA FORNARINA", the lovely mistress of Raphael, performed the miracle of linking up the Cnidian Venus with the Roman Madonna. Phryne and Margherita, when the human history of art comes to be written, will be highest in the hierarchy of the sainted courtezans.

Pregnant young matrons by the millions have gazed adoringly into the calm, beautiful eyes of the Sistine Madonna, praying that the infant within the womb, if a daughter, may be like her. Believers in pre-natal influence have even gone so far as to ascribe the general loveliness of Italian girls to the adoration of the Virgins of Raphael, of whom the Sistine Madonna is chief.

In real life, before her apotheosis in paint, the Sistine Madonna was Margherita, daughter of Francesco Luti, a baker of Siena, and immortal in the annals of love as well as art as "La Fornarina", the favorite mistress of Raphael.

Raphael, of a gay nature, lusty as a young bull, and ever ready

for a light joust in the field of love, had nevertheless for "La Fornarina" a grand passion. For her he postponed time and again his projected marriage to Maria da Bibiena, "niece" (probably daughter) of the Cardinal Bibiena, his patron and protector—legend even has it he drove Maria to death from heartbreak.

It was to "La Fornarina"—"a light attachment by which he was enchained", as the annoyed Vasari has it—he paid that last love visit that resulted in a fever, which put him into his grave four days later.

"La Fornarina's" last kiss, like the final fevered kiss of Giorgione's mistress, was fatal. The kiss of Giorgione's inamorata, however, was malignantly active—she, without knowing it, was in the throes of the plague, and she communicated the disease to her lover. "La Fornarina's" lover, who was of about the same age Giorgione had been—Raphael died on his thirty-fourth birthday, on Good Friday—was worn down from overwork, and was unable to shake off the more ordinary Roman fever that followed a cold contracted in the over-heated night of love he spent with her.

After Raphael's death, though he provided generously for her in his will, Margherita took refuge in the convent of Saint Appollonia in Trastevere, whose doors were ever open to repentant women, and the chances are she devoted the remainder of her life to the service of the Virgin, of whom she is the physical image on earth to millions of worshippers.

Margherita lived with her father, the baker from Siena, in a

house in the Via di Santa Dorotea in Rome at the time Raphael came there, already famous despite his youth, to begin his great work for Pope Julius II.

"The beautiful young girl," Passavant relates, "was very frequently in a little garden adjoining the house, where, the wall not being very high, it was easy to see her from the outside. So the young men, especially the artists—always passionate admirers of beauty—did not fail to come and look at her, by climbing up above the wall. Raphael is said to have seen her for the first time as she was bathing her pretty feet in a little fountain in the garden. Struck by her perfect beauty, he fell deeply in love with her, and after having made acquaintance with her and discovering that her mind was as beautiful as her body, he became so much attached as to be unable to live without her."

Raphael's noble friends, however, already had the handsome, popular young artist spotted as a valuable matrimonial pawn, particularly the Cardinal Bibiena, whose "niece" was sighing and all but swooning under his glances. And there was another Roman girl of even higher rank and even handsomer—"she and her relatives," Raphael wrote home to his friends in Urbino, "are ready to give me three thousand gold scudi as a dowry."

Under these circumstances, there was nothing to do except to take the baker's daughter as mistress, but Raphael, now working on the decorations for St. Peter's, was able to set her up comfortably in a house of her own—a house to bear long afterward a

VIRGIN AND CHILD – *FRA FILIPPO LIPPI* UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE

*The Virgin was posed by the painter-monk's mistress, the nun Lucrezia Buti, and the child is their bastard son who became illustrious as Filippino Lippi*

tablet with this inscription: "Tradition states that the one who became so dear to Raphael, and whom he raised to fame, lived in this house."

The fame that came to "La Fornarina" includes the portrait of her now in the Barberini palace, Rome—"a most beautiful portrait," says Vasari, "which might be supposed alive." Vasari is ever discreet in his references to her, and does not name her—her name is learned from other sources.

In this portrait, "La Fornarina" appears almost nude—her hand in position with reference to her feminine charms not unlike the hand of the Cnidian Venus, and she wears also the armlet of Venus.

Raphael entrusted his lovely mistress to the care of his friend, Il Baviera, since he could not openly see to her welfare himself. To this "certain lady" under Baviera's protection, Vasari relates, "Raphael was attached to the day of his death," and speaking further of her portrait: "Raphael also painted the portrait of Beatrice of Ferrara, with those of other ladies; that of his own inamorata is more particularly to be specified."

Though not an open scandal in Rome, Raphael's devotion to his beautiful, low-born mistress was no secret to the initiated.

For instance, "his intimate friend Agostino Chigi had commissioned him to paint the first floor of his palace, but Raphael was at the time so much occupied with the love which he bore to the lady of his choice that he could not give sufficient attention to the

work. Agostino, therefore, falling at length into despair of seeing it finished, made so many efforts by means of his friends and by his own care, that after much difficulty he at length prevailed on the lady to take up her abode in his house, where she was accordingly installed in apartments near those which Raphael was painting; in this manner the work was ultimately brought to a conclusion."

Thus did the baker's daughter have at least a taste of the high life enjoyed continuously by the Cardinal's "niece" and the other young Roman heiress who were unable to take her genius-lover away from her. In another of her portraits, known as "La Donna Velata", Raphael has decked her in garments becoming the rank of a resident in the palace of the Chigi.

But the final fame that has come to Margherita was the selection of her as model for the picture that has made both painter and mistress deathless through the ages, the Sistine Madonna. All three pictures—"La Fornarina", "La Donna Velata" and the supreme Madonna—are assigned to the year 1516—the year of his highest achievement—the year of his most slavish devotion to a sweetheart worthy of him, as the Duchess of Alba was to become worthy of Goya.

Four years later, this mistress, who had stimulated his genius to its highest point—some of us prefer to see the climax in "La Fornarina" rather than in the Sistine Madonna—was unwittingly

to cause his death. Those were four years of devotion on the part of both.

"The painter meanwhile," relates Vasari, in speaking of his strenuous labors at St. Peter's, "did not abandon the light attachment by which he was enchained, and one day on returning to his house from one of these secret visits, he was seized with a violent fever, which being mistaken for a cold, the physicians inconsiderately caused him to be bled, whereby he found himself exhausted, when he had rather required to be strengthened. Thereupon he made his will, and, as a good Christian, he sent the object of his attachment from the house, but left her a sufficient provision wherewith she might live in decency."

Vasari had no kindness in his heart for the baker's daughter, whom he seems to have regarded as a detriment to Raphael's genius rather than a help. I'd rather believe that the Cardinal "uncle" of Maria or some other of Pope Leo's stern clergymen turned poor Margherita into the street when she sought the bedside of her dying lover. And they may have done it in words that drove her into the convent of repentant women.

## XI. OF OLYMPIAN FRAILTIES IN THE PALE SPECTRAL MADONNAS OF FRA FILIPPO LIPPI AND BOTTICELLI

THE Sistine Madonna is not unique in her sinful origin. Sin, indeed, is an element we had best accept cheerfully in art, else, as we grow in knowledge, we'll find much that is as dark and bitter to brood about as was the Virginity of the Madonna to the devotees of the Middle Ages.

There is, for example, the Virgin of Fra Filippo Lippi in the Museum of Berlin. This Madonna is the beauteous, slight, pale nun, Lucrezia Buti, and the Babe she is adoring is her own bastard son in conjunction with the painter. The Babe himself, Filippino Lippi, was destined to become an artist of renown almost equal to that of his father.

Pope Pius II, after the birth of the babe, released the recreant friar and the wayward nun from the vows they had taken upon themselves to break through love, and they were lawfully married and Filippino was legitimatized.

It was no vulgar liaison, this adventure of the talented artist-

monk and his beauteous model-nun, but one of the high irregular romances of art and ecclesiastical history.

"In Prato, near Florence, where Fra Filippo had some relations"—it is Vasari speaking—"he took up his abode for some months, and there executed various works for the whole surrounding district, in company with the Carmelite, Fra Diamante, who had been his companion novitiate.

"Having then received a commission from the nuns of Santa Margherita to paint a picture for the high altar of their church, he one day chanced to see the daughter of Francesco Buti, a citizen of Florence, who had been to the convent, either as a novice or boarder.

"Fra Filippo, having given a glance at Lucrezia, for such was the name of the girl, who was exceedingly beautiful and graceful, so persuaded the nuns that he prevailed on them to permit him to make a likeness of her for the figure of the Virgin in the work he was executing for them. The result of this was that the painter fell violently in love with Lucrezia, and at length found means to influence her in such a manner that he led her away from the nuns, and on a certain day, when she had gone forth to do honor to the Girdle of Our Lady, a venerable relic preserved at Prato and exhibited on that occasion, he bore her from their keeping.

"By this event the nuns were deeply disgraced, and the father of Lucrezia was so grievously afflicted thereat that he never more recovered his cheerfulness, and made every possible effort to

regain his child. But Lucrezia, whether retained by fear or by some other cause, would not return, but remained with Filippo, to whom she bore a son, who was also called Filippo, and who eventually became a most excellent and very famous painter like his father."

It was a celebrated scandal of the period, naturally, and there are other accounts extant, adding details and involving Spinetta Buti, a year older than Lucrezia, and a stout champion of her little sister. Both had taken their first vows, but Spinetta did not blame Lucrezia for running away from the veil when her "great love" appeared in the person of the elderly artist. Indeed, Lucrezia set an example, and Spinetta and some of the other novices ran away on love adventures, less serious, however, than Lucrezia's.

Vasari's learned commentator, Milanesi, conscientious and avid of facts, examined every scrap of gossip that got onto paper, and his researches are summed up thus:

"In 1452 Filippo bought a house at Prato, staying there till about 1463. In 1456, when fifty years old, he fell in love with Lucrezia Buti. Lucrezia's father, Francesco Buti, was a Florentine silk merchant, who died leaving a family of eleven children to the care of the elder brother Antonio. The latter was forced by limited means to put Spinetta Buti, born in 1434, and Lucrezia, born in 1435, into the convent of Santa Margherita at Prato, of which Filippo was chaplain. Lucrezia ran away with him on the day of the festival of the Holy Girdle, and in 1457 gave birth to a child,

who became the famous painter Filippino Lippi. Spinetta also fled from the convent with several other nuns, but all were forced to return in 1459, and re-entered the novitiate. In 1461 Pope Pius II granted Filippo a dispensation recognizing the friar and the nun as a married couple, and Lucrezia in 1465 bore a daughter named Alessandra."

Lucrezia's pose for the Virgin for her home convent was only the beginning of her services as model for this middle-aged painter who had fallen so adoringly for her young, delicate beauty, and she is the Madonna in his subsequent canvases, some of the most spiritual in the entire history of church art.

Her delicate spirituality is matched only by Simonetta, Botticelli's model alike for Madonnas and Venuses—most renowned of all the courtezan-models in the history of Italian art, not even excepting "La Fornarina", who was content to be one man's mistress, faithful and unobtrusive.

Simonetta died at twenty-three of consumption, but before that sad day, April 26, 1476, when it seemed to the city of Florence that the light of heaven had paled into gloom with the withdrawal of the radiant face of the mistress of Giuliano di Medici, Simonetta had lived a life no other beauty could have crowded into triple her decades.

All painters had painted her, all poets had sung her, all men who had been admitted to the presence of Giuliano and his

brother, Lorenzo the Magnificent, had done homage at her feet. Gentle and sweet as she was beautiful, free and magnetic, she was popular throughout Florence in all castes of society.

She had a husband, Marco Vespucci, but nobody seemed to mind—least of all the discreet, self-effacing, prospering Marco (a cousin to Amerigo who was later to dispute with a fellow Italian, one Colombo, the honor of the discovery of a continent west of Spain).

She was sixteen when her husband brought her to Florence from her native Genoa. She was wealthy and of a great family of merchants, and consequently moved at once into the circles of the Medici.

Hardly had she made her debut in Florence when she came under the discerning eyes of Lorenzo and Giuliano.

"From the day when they first saw the girl, who was known as 'the star of Genoa'," writes a rapturous Frenchman, Robert de la Sizeranne, recent biographer and apologist for Simonetta, "the two brothers were dazzled by her and followed her with an admiration which ceased only with her death. It lasted seven years.

"During those seven years Simonetta presided over all the feasts which the Medici gave in their palace of Via Larga (nowadays the Riccardi Palace), in their villas at Careggi, at Fiesole and at Cafaggiuolo. Her gayety communicated itself to everyone.

"Lorenzo was distracted from her by affairs of state, but Giuli-

SIMONETTA – *POLLAJUOLO* CONDE MUSEUM

*Mistress of Giuliano di Medici, and Botticelli's model for Venuses and Virgins alike*

ano never left her. He went everywhere she went, lost in his dream of love: a dream too well known, too public, too much sung by the poets and symbolized by the painters—and too little denounced by the women—to have been anything but platonic."

Other historians are less gallant than the Frenchman.

"The husband, Marco Vespucci," continues M. de la Sizeranne, nonchalantly, "seldom made his appearance. But," a happy idea strikes him, "of what account was a husband of a symbol?"

Vasari, bluntly, without naming Simonetta, refers to her as Giuliano's mistress—even only as one of his mistresses, with none of the poetic rapture that afterward raised her to the supreme rank of the Madonna of the Medici's heart. It is to be inferred from Vasari, also, that Lorenzo's wife, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, also an illustrious beauty, may have had something to do with Simonetta being more in the company of Giuliano than of his brother, "il Magnificio".

However that may be, and whatever her sins, Simonetta was divinely beautiful, and looking at her as the nude Venus of Botticelli, we can understand something of Lorenzo's solemn rhapsody when he heard of her death. Walking out under the evening sky, he suddenly was aware of a star that seemed brighter than he had ever known it before.

"See!" he exclaimed. "There is the soul of that marvelous woman! Either she has changed into this new star or she has joined her soul to it."

Ghirlandajo, attached to the court of the Medici, painted her—the same Ghirlandajo who introduced into his "Birth of the Virgin" that other celebrated Italian courtezan of the period, Ginerva di Benci, dressed in the gayest and most gorgeous of Florentine finery, advancing to congratulate Anna, the mother of the baby Madonna. Pollajuolo, too, painted Simonetta—naked to the waist—and so did Verrocchio.

But it was Botticelli, favorite art protégé of the Medici, who was to immortalize her, and to make his own fame everlasting through her.

M. de la Sizeranne does not overshoot the mark this time when he exclaims: "Botticelli painted no one but her. His Madonnas, his Venuses, his allegories—all were taken from her. That face with the pointed chin, the prominent cheekbones, the eyes wide open with fever, of which Taine said: 'She promises us Infinity, and she herself is not certain of living,' is hers."

Botticelli, mystic, enthusiast—perhaps not quite "all there"—had beheld a vision of loveliness that burned itself into his brain forever. Simonetta had disrobed for him. No need of accusing her of according to him any remnants of her chastity—Botticelli's was a decadent constitution that did not require physical contact.

The nude body of Simonetta was enveloped for Botticelli with the mystical aura of her face—the happy feverish glow of an apparent robustness that consumptives sometimes have—a voluptuousness that kept Giuliano for seven years in paradise.

It is this fever that is sensed in the Venuses and the Madonnas of Botticelli. Avid student of the nude, as we are told, he found the body of Simonetta the supreme expression of creation. He lived for thirty-four years after his goddess died, but never did he lose the vision of her—and never is she wholly absent from his paint.

"The Birth of Venus" in the Uffizi is his supreme achievement. He borrowed the idea from the lost masterpiece of Apelles, and he took a suggestion of form from the Cnidian Venus, but she is Simonetta and not Phryne—Simonetta, the Venus of the court of Lorenzo and the Madonna of the heart of her painter.

## XII. OF POPE ALEXANDER VI AND HIS OLYMPIAN IDEAS OF THE MAKING OF A MADONNA

RAPHAEL intended no sacrilege when he transformed his loved, frail Margherita into the Sistine Madonna, nor Fra Filippo Lippi, when he gave to his Virgins the features of his pale, sinful little nun, nor yet Botticelli, when he transferred to the Most Holy Madonna the face and the exquisitely rounded breasts of the courtezan Simonetta. For, though to the Medici, Simonetta was a creature of carnal love, to Botticelli she was a divinity on earth.

But I'm not so sure such pure devotion went into the making of a Madonna by Pinturicchio for the Borgia apartment in the Vatican, with Giulia Farnese, current mistress of Pope Alexander VI, as model.

There is a cynical hellishness in the idea of the new Pope and Giulia continuing their lustful orgies with this Virgin looking down upon them from the walls.

Giulia was sixteen when Pinturicchio gave her back her virginity in paint, and the Cardinal Pope was forty years her senior.

ADAM AND EVE – *JAN VAN EYCK* BRUSSELS MUSEUM

*This high-waisted variation of the Cnidian Venus set the type for Germanic nudes for centuries*

The lovely Giulia was to lend her charms later for a purpose almost equally pious—and cynical. It was she who sat for Guglielmo della Porta for his statue of Truth, which adorns the tomb of another Pope, Paul III, her brother. Truth is almost as much of a stranger in Paul's presence as the Madonna in the presence of Alexander.

This brother, Alessandro Farnese, gave Giulia as a present to the powerful Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia. Alessandro had committed a series of crimes that made it dangerous for him to show his face in Rome. Exile irked him—he missed his social good times. He wanted indulgence from the old Pope, Innocent VIII. Cardinal Borgia was the Pope's conscience. Giulia was the gratuity.

A few days later, Innocent VIII tottered into his grave, and Cardinal Borgia was elected Pope. He smuggled into the Vatican with him the pretty Giulia. Through the exercise of her talents, her brother was not only cleansed thoroughly of sin, but he was advanced rapidly in the service of the church. In due time he, too, attained the chair of St. Peter.

Pinturicchio was born for the period. "Among other qualities," says Vasari, "he possessed that of giving considerable satisfaction to princes and nobles." He not only "quickly brought the works commanded by them to an end", but he had no troublesome conscience in the manner of executing the commissions.

The new Borgian Pope, on moving into the Vatican, set aside a series of six rooms in a row for his devotions, pious and other-

wise. These he commissioned the painter, already his friend and retainer and the sycophant companion of his pleasures, to decorate anew, and these decorations, for the most part, still persist.

Not only was the young Guilia painted as the Madonna, but her Papal lover was portrayed in adoration of her—one of the wise men. Where Pinturicchio got the model for the Babe isn't specified—Giulia was virgin when she was presented to the Cardinal, and this little gift to him from her brother had not had time to present him in turn with another tinier gift, as had Fra Filippo Lippi's nun.

The holy Alexander was not the only Borgia model. There appeared in the murals a Saint Catherine, and she is none other than Lucrezia Borgia, daughter of the Pope, and his incestuous mistress before Giulia. In the sacred assemblage have been spotted others of Alexander's extensive harem, who are designated by a Decameronesque satirist of the day, "Pampina, Fiametta, Lauretta, and Neiphle".

All these portraits of the most notorious courtezans of Italy are reputed as accurate as the portraits of Giulia, Lucrezia and Alexander himself—the Pope seems to have taken a huge delight in thus adorning the inhabitable apartments of the holiest of palaces.

Pinturicchio may be regarded as having come logically by his cynicism toward scriptural personages, and persons of the saintly legends. His master, Perugino, was an atheist—as was, for that

matter, their good friend Cardinal Borgia, now become Pope Alexander—vicar on earth for a shadow! Perugino, however, was likewise master of Raphael, and Raphael was religious in a healthy, normal, careless way.

Perugino's atheism didn't prevent that great painter from doing some fine Christs and Virgins. His Virgins had as model Chiara Fancelli, daughter of an architect. "A very beautiful girl," says Vasari, and presently Perugino took her to wife. She was model, too, for his female saints, and she is specifically identified as accurately portrayed as the angel with Tobias in the National Gallery, London. Perugino gets by in art history with a minimum of sex scandal—his fling exhausts itself in a dash into the face of organized religion.

Mistresses and miscellaneous harlots as models for holy personages presently became so universal among Italian painters that Savonarola, the St. Paul and William Jennings Bryan of his time, burst forth in Florence, chief citadel of the gilded iniquity, in 1497:

"What is the present practice at Florence?

"As soon as mothers have married off their daughters, they eagerly exhibit them, after dressing them up as nymphs, and, first of all, they take them to Santa Liberata."

(In France, during the Second Empire, this practice of mothers exhibiting their daughters in the flesh markets—before marriage as well as afterward—was viciously satirised by Felicien Rops in

that famous plate of his, "Ma Fille, Monsieur Cabanel"—an elderly woman presenting her naked daughter to the fashionable painter of the nude as model. In America, we have currently the same condition in another art—the theater. Practically every all-but-naked chorus girl has her mother in her undressing room preparing her for the public display before the footlights.)

"These are the idols you have set up in my temple," continued Savonarola—"the figures you have painted in your churches, the images of your gods! The young say, on seeing such or such a woman, 'There is Magdalen, there is St. John,' because you have made your pictures of these persons resemble this one and that, which is very wicked and harmful to the sacred things of God.

"You bring all human vanities into the churches. Do you think that the Virgin Mary was dressed as you represent her? I tell you she wore the garb of a poor woman and concealed her face. St. Elizabeth also dressed simply. You have given the Holy Mother the costume of a courtezan. These are the idols you have brought into my temple!"

The thunders of the monk of San Marco were potent. All Florence was stirred—even Lorenzo the Magnificent was impressed. Savonarola's crusade against the sinful in art culminated finally in the famous *auto-da-fé* of 1497—the funeral pyre of priceless treasures, sculpture as well as paintings.

"Now it was the custom in that city" (Florence), runs Vasari's account, "to erect cabins of firewood and other combustibles on

the public piazza during the time of the Carnival, and on the night of Shrove Tuesday, the people were wont to dance around them while thus burning; men and women that is to say, joining hands, according to ancient custom, encircled the fires, with songs and dances. On the return of the Carnival following the period of which we now speak, however, Fra Girolamo's exhortations had so powerfully affected the people, that instead of these accustomed dances, they brought pictures and works in sculpture, many by the most excellent masters—all which they cast into the fire, with books and musical instruments, which were burnt in like manner —a most lamentable destruction; and more particularly as to paintings."

The artists themselves joined in the demonstration of this holy, fatal insanity.

"To this pile," continues Vasari, "brought Baccio della Porta all his studies and drawings which he had made from the nude figure, when they were consumed in the flames. His example was followed by Lorenzo di Credi, and by many others, who received the appellation of 'The Weepers'."

Even Perugino, the atheist, was shaken, and he succumbed, for a time, along with Fra Bartolommeo, frank servant of God.

But the most pitiful victim was poor, weak-witted Botticelli, who "totally abandoned painting, and not having any other means of living, he fell into very great difficulty. He became a 'Weeper', and abandoned all labor, insomuch that, finding himself at length

become old, being also very poor, he must have died of hunger had he not been supported by Lorenzo di Medici."

Fortunately Botticelli's pictures were beyond his reach, most of them under the protection of the Medici, and he could not throw them into the holy fire. Lorenzo, who had quickly regained his balance (he had hoped the monk might have a sure-fire salvation for sinful souls, but found he, like all fanatics, had only blather), kept his art treasures out of reach of the mob. Botticelli's "Birth of Venus" and "Allegory of Spring", pagan pictures the poor painter might have wished especially to sacrifice, were in a remote villa of Cosimo di Medici at the time of the fire.

Fortunately, also, the monk himself was to ascend to heaven within a year and before he could organize another Shrove Tuesday *auto-da-fé* to complete the destruction of the art treasures of Florence. As it is, we have to get along without many "Lucrezias, Cleopatras, Faustinas", to say nothing of some spicy Virgins—more or less faithful portraits of famous beauties of the period, "Bencina, Lena Morella, Bina, Maria di Lenzi", as a historian of the period enumerates them.

Andrea del Sarto was only eleven years old at the time of the conflagration, but even had his life work been accomplished, Savonarola could not have turned his cannon on him justly. Leastwise, not for sex transgression.

For Andrea del Sarto was married to his model—and, body of

Christ! how solidly married! It is one of the satanic jokes of history that she should be the model for the most notorious of all the Madonnas—as well as the most darkly lovely—"Madonna of the Harpies".

Those harpies, painted on the pedestal whereon the Virgin stands, are the pathetic evidence that poor Andrea understood what he had married, even if he couldn't resist the temptation to continue adoring his wife.

She is the Xantippe of the Renaissance, without the grace of being grotesque and comic, as was the wife of Socrates. She was beautiful, after a weird, stern fashion—the "Madonna of the Harpies" is as hypnotic as a Medea. She commanded admiration, not only from poor, brow-beaten Andrea, but from all she came in contact with, even if she had the love and respect of nobody except her husband.

Vasari, militant personal friend of del Sarto, recited at a length as great as his indignation the story of the painter's marriage and his sufferings, but in the editions, after the first, of his "Lives", he softened his account and curtailed the details.

It is in his first, spontaneous recital we are interested, and here it is:

"At that time there was a most beautiful girl in the Via di San Gallo, who was married to a cap-maker, and who, though born of a poor and vicious father, carried about her as much pride and haughtiness as beauty and fascination. She delighted in trapping

the hearts of men, and among others ensnared the unlucky Andrea, whose immoderate love for her soon caused him to neglect the studies demanded by his art, and in great measure to discontinue the assistance which he had given to his parents.

"Now it chanced that a sudden and grievous illness seized the husband of this woman, who rose no more from his bed, but died thereof. Without taking counsel of his friends therefor; without regard to the dignity of his art or the consideration due to his genius, and to the eminence he had attained with so much labor; without a word, in short, to any of his kindred, Andrea took this Lucrezia di Baccio del Fede, such was the name of the woman, to be his wife; her beauty appearing to him to merit much at his hands, and his love for her having more influence over him than the glory and honor towards which he had begun to make such hopeful advances.

"But when this news became known in Florence, the respect and affection which his friends had previously borne to Andrea changed to contempt and disgust, since it appeared to them that the darkness of this disgrace had obscured for a time all the glory and renown obtained by his talents.

"But he destroyed his own peace as well as estranged his friends by this act, seeing that he soon became jealous, and found that he had besides fallen into the hands of an artful woman, who made him do as she pleased in all things. He abandoned his own poor father and mother, for example, and adopted the father and the

sisters of his wife in their stead; insomuch that all who knew the facts mourned over him, and he soon began to be as much avoided as he had previously been sought after. His disciples still remained with him, it is true, in the hope of learning something useful, yet there was not one of them, great or small, who was not maltreated by his wife, both by evil words and despiteful actions: none could escape her blows, but although Andrea lived in the midst of all that torment, he yet accounted it a high pleasure."

Vasari is as wrong here as he is in the instance of Raphael and Margherita. For, curiously enough, Lucrezia seems to have been the precise stimulant Andrea del Sarto's genius needed—material here for a Sacher-Masoch type of biography. He began doing big things with her as his model and his inspiration—so big that his fame reached far out of Florence, to the court of Francis I, King of the French.

Francis invited him to come to Paris to paint some portraits, and thither journeyed the artist, whose fame was running ahead of his fortune. He hadn't money to take Lucrezia along.

"And now, had Andrea del Sarto only reflected on all that he had escaped from," laments Vasari, "and duly weighed the advantageous character of that position to which fate had conducted him, I make no doubt but that, to say nothing of riches, he might have attained great honors." For, starting with a portrait of the Dauphin, Andrea was becoming a phenomenal success at the French court.

But Lucrezia seems to have loved him as deeply as only a jealous, shrewish, nagging wife can love. She wrote him pathetic letters. Already homesick for his beautiful Xantippe, the painter persuaded the King to let him go to Florence on a visit, promising faithfully to come back, even "taking an oath on the gospels".

The King, though doubting his promises, advanced him expense money, and reluctantly let him go. Once back in Florence with his beloved, happy in the atmosphere of her blows and her curses, he forgot all about Paris, and all about the money Francis had advanced him—"and the French monarch was so greatly angered thereby, that for a long time after he would not look at paintings of Florentine masters".

But what care we for the petty annoyances of kings? We have the "Madonna of the Harpies". Moreover, virtue is triumphant. The chaste Madonna of the Harpies can turn up her nose in heaven at the poor sinful Sistine Madonna.

## XIII. HOW FRA ANGELICO VISITED HEAVEN AND CHOSE HIS MODELS WHERE SINFUL OLYMPIAS DARE NOT TREAD

Not all the Virgins of the Renaissance owed their existence to the mistresses or the wedded wives of their creators, however, if Michelangelo is to be believed.

"Surely the good monk," said he, viewing the Madonnas and angels of Fra Angelico, "visited Paradise and was allowed to choose his models there."

A less sarcastic, more matter-of-fact commentator on the holy friar's work explains: "As the study of the nude body was forbidden to a monk, he concentrated all his feeling for physical beauty, all his capacity for dramatic expression, on the faces of his saints and angels, and became a unique exponent of religious sentiment."

Sometimes this gentle priest seems to have got his sexes confused—or was on the verge of confusing them. His portrait of the Venerable Antonino, his spiritual leader in the Order of Dominicans, reminds the German critic, Hausenstein, of "some gentle old woman", and most of us will be forced to agree that there is

"a certain touch of feminism, complicating the tenderness and delicacy we meet in Fra Angelico".

Constitutionally, it appears, Fra Angelico had no lustful urge to run away with a Madonna model, as had Fra Filippo Lippi.

But of artists of homosexual tendencies and their choice, through the Dark Ages and even into the Renaissance, of young male models to pose for Madonnas, I do not propose to speak here, having treated them at some length in my *Venus Castina.*

Fra Angelico, had he been inclined to ill-natured retort, might have answered Michelangelo: "Better get my models in Heaven than out of Athenian gymnasia where Socrates and Alcibiades used to go for esthetic excitement"—but Fra Angelico was by way of becoming a saint, and saints do not indulge in repartee.

Michelangelo might have ground his teeth in silent rage, for he and that other giant of the Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci, belong in the dominion of Venus Castina rather than of Venus Olympia, but we should note here a slight preoccupation of each of them with the female model, rather than the male. They both did nude studies of women as well as of young men, but neither, except in the cases here to be cited, seems to have been inspired by the female model—which is necessary for artists within the category of my "Olympians".

Of Leonardo first. For four years he worked on the "Mona Lisa", portrait of the girl wife of his friend Francesco di Bartolom-

meo del Giocondo. It would be easy to account for this long, lingering labor of art on the grounds that it was equally a labor of love. But that love did not exist. There was no scandal and the documents are clear.

Leonardo during all those weary weeks he was making La Gioconda sit for him again and again was trying to catch that tantalising smile—and that smile, as I have shown in *Venus Castina,* was not her smile at all, but the smile of a boy who had been a great favorite in the atelier of Verrochio, his master, in Leonardo's youth, and that Verrochio had succeeded in catching and fixing on the lips of his "David". The youth may have been Leonardo himself—and now he was trying to project this Narcissian smile onto the features of La Gioconda.

But there is a legend of a nude "Mona Lisa" that Leonardo made, a nude that has disappeared—a legend of many sketches for this nude, likewise vanished—sketches made from the naked body of La Gioconda. Was she, then, after all, a mild stimulant? Or did he study her as he studied the muscles and tendons of the many corpses he dissected—necessary for a knowledge of anatomy, but a disagreeable necessity?

"The act of procreation," he jotted into his innumerable notes, "and everything that has any relation to it is so disgusting that human beings would soon die out if it were not a traditional custom and if there were no pretty faces and sensual dispositions."

Not a very encouraging philosophy for our "Olympians".

Vittoria Colonna is the one female love romance in the long career of Michelangelo, whose devotions, like Leonardo's, were after the fashion of classic Greece.

Michelangelo and the Amazonia Colonna met in the early winter of the lives of both of them. They were of about equal age. She was "a very plain woman with a large masculine nose". His nudes take on no sudden, inspired variations. There is no evidence their relations were other than platonic. It would be too unkind to say Vittoria is the Cumæan Sibyl.

Michelangelo did not go to Paradise, like Fra Angelico, for his female models—but neither did he go to the silken couch of love.

## XIV. HOW REMBRANDT AND RUBENS FOUND THEIR OLYMPIAS IN A BLEAK, REFORMATION-RIDDEN NORTH

REFORMATION was in the wind when art began to blossom in the north countries, and though Martin Luther, monk, and Katarina von Bora, nun, had been no more discreet in their unwedded bliss than Fra Filippo Lippi and Lucrezia Buti, and had proof in shape of a parallel to Filippino, still the Reformation was more hypocritically pious than the easy-going, near-atheistic Catholicism of Italy, and the painters refrained from flaunting their mistress-models in the face of the world.

It is necessary to come down to Rembrandt and Rubens before we encounter the "Olympian" psychology in full operation.

The Flemish and German pioneers were not without their nudes. They start with the Eve of one or the other of the almost legendary brothers Van Eyck, who were dead before 1450. This Eve set a pattern that persisted long in the non-Latin countries—the pattern roughly even for geniuses like Dürer and Cranach.

Van Eyck seems to have had some conception of the Cnidian

Venus, else he had a fresh inspiration to use one of the hands of his Eve to do service for a fig leaf. Otherwise he held the tribe of Praxiteles in contempt. His Eve is a big-bellied, wasp-waisted creature, with the waist line high up toward her breasts—about midway between the breasts and the navel—giving her the appearance of being pregnant—the general appearance of these north country nudes.

A high corset, in vogue for many generations, is blamed for this Germanic female shape—a shape which began to worry Dürer when he got out of his own country, down into Italy where Giorgione and Titian were doing Venuses that would not be out of place today in our undressed stage choruses.

"The Italians are to be praised for their nude figures," Dürer post-carded a friend back home.

Dürer had a wife, Agnes Frei, a shrewish, avaricious, depressing creature, whose reputation in art annals is almost as unhappy as that of the harpy wife of Andrea del Sarto. She seems to have been maliciously jealous of her husband, went with him on the trip to Italy, seldom left his side, and kept always at low ebb his naturally melancholy spirits.

"In Albrecht I have lost the very best friend I had in the world," wrote his crony Pirkheimer on his death, "and I grieve at nothing more than that he should have had such a bitter end, which I can lay to no one's account but that of his wife, who worried his heart and was nagging at him in such wise that in the end he was ema-

SLEEPING NYMPH – *CRANACH*

LEIPZIG MUSEUM

*Germanic variation of Giorgione and Titian. The model was an unknown courtezan*

ciated and worn down to nothing, like a billet. She did not allow him to seek cheer or visit people. This shrewish woman never let care depart, for which behavior she indeed had no excuse; and she egged him on to work night and day, that he should earn more and be able to leave her something when he died. And she still carries on as if she must go to rack and ruin, in spite of the fact that Albrecht left her almost the value of six thousand florins. For whoever was well disposed to this man and tried to protect him, he was deemed an enemy by her, which greatly sorrowed Albrecht and hurried him to his grave. To be sure she and her sisters aren't rogues; on the contrary I don't in the least doubt that they are honest and pious women. But it were better for one to have a rogue who in other respects is kind to one, rather than such nagging and scolding pietists, who never give a moment's peace, night or day."

Pirkheimer seems to have "protested too much", leading historians to look into the records of his association with Dürer, and to the discovery that Frau Agnes had no use for him, accusing him of trying to lure her husband constantly away from his work on convivial drinking parties in the back barrooms. But there is enough other evidence to indicate Agnes was no saint, and that Dürer had about as difficult a time with her as Andrea del Sarto had with Lucrezia, with the difference that Dürer did not take any masochistic pleasure in the domestic persecution, but lived in a habitual state of dejection.

However, Agnes Frei had a handsome face, and a magnificent

form, and from pictures of Dürer's, believed to be portraits of her, it is evident that she was his model for the Amazonian nude "Lucrezia" at Münich, and for certain of his etched nudes, and that she set the type for his glorious "Fates"—of earth earthy.

The psychology here differs from our ideal "Olympians", who are supposed to create under stress of an exalting inspiration from their models. But Dürer is not wholly unique. Was not Cézanne's wife just as much of a depressant because of her lack of interest and understanding of his work? And yet, some of the Frenchman's best portraits are of her, and Mme. Cézanne posed for him undressed, too, for the idealized figures in his landscapes—so fearful of naked women was the shy, morose painter. Mme. Cézanne is not a complete parallel, however. If no commanding beauty, like the wife of Dürer, neither was she malicious and nagging. Mme. Cézanne was a negative depressant, not an active, malignant wrecker of genius.

Whoever was Cranach's unknown model, she had something of the chaste voluptuousness of Botticelli's Simonetta, else Cranach, who was under the spell of Luther and regarded women as the embodiment of original sin and so to be shunned, dreamed of her as such. For she is not carnal, like the nudes of Dürer—her nakedness has been sublimated. "Courtezan", his model is alleged to have been, but maybe by foes who called Luther's nun a whore. Cranach knew the Venuses of Titian and Giorgione, and he experimentally stretched one of his quaint, high-waisted, big-

bellied German Venuses in a landscape after the fashion of the Italians.

Van Eyck, thus, with his Eve aping the Cnidian Venus, and Cranach, with his Diana lying nonchalantly naked on the greensward beside a fountain, link early Germanic art loosely with "Olympia"—distant cousins, with a common remote ancestry.

Rembrandt had two favorite models, both his wives, and both his models before marriage—one certainly his mistress and the other intimately kind to him. He had the unparalleled happiness of having each of these young women devoted to him with her whole passionate soul, and of possessing himself a soul versatile enough in turn to make each of them happy.

Saskia van Uylenburg came into his life, a girl, when he was twenty-eight and prosperous. He was aging and poor when Hendrickje Stoffels, also a girl, made her advent. Hendrickje was his maidservant, and when the neighbors discovered she meant something to him more than a washer of pots and pans, she was already the mother of his tiny daughter Cornelia.

Saskia is preserved for us in all her nude beauty as "Danaë" in the Hermitage, Leningrad. Hendrickje, also nude, is the "Bathsheba" in the Louvre. But she wears the armlet of Venus, which Saskia has not. Was that Rembrandt's delicate way of communicating to the world that this is the courtezan?

The fair-haired Saskia was a young lady of a family of mer-

chant princes of Amsterdam, in which circles the talented young painter from Leyden was just then a sensation. Painter and sitter fell simultaneously in love, and after the usual fight of money against genius in the matrimonial gamble, Rembrandt was awarded Saskia, together with a handsome dowry.

For eight years they were happy and prosperous. She found her chief delight in acting as his model, and he painted her in season and out, every minute he could steal away from his piled-up commissions. Then Saskia died, in process of giving birth to their son Titus.

This was in 1642—and the year not only terminated his domestic bliss, but witnessed also the start of the sudden decline of his popularity and prosperity as a portrait painter.

For this was the year of "The Night Watch"—reckoned by posterity his masterpiece, but considered a huge hunk of Edam cheese by the Captain and the Company of Banning Cock, who had commissioned the picture to hang in their guild-hall, in rivalry with other companies of the Dutch Civic Guard.

When Rembrandt delivered the painting to them, these good burghers perceived they had been cheated, and loud was their clamor in consequence—a clamor that ultimately spelt bankruptcy for the artist.

Their understanding was that Rembrandt would do sixteen portraits that these burghers, individually, could show to the visitors to their hall on their reception nights. But here was a mass of

ANDROMEDA – *RUBENS* BERLIN MUSEUM

*The model was the painter's bride, Helena Fourment*

shadows, with half the faces entirely indistinguishable and only a few of the others recognizable.

Rembrandt angrily refused to alter his picture, and from now on, painters with common sense got the commissions—painters who could do, at least, a likeness.

Rembrandt drew more and more into the solitude of his home, located on the border of the Amsterdam ghetto, with the young Titus and the boy's nurse.

The artist and Saskia had spent freely and gayly from her fortune and from the income from his brush, and the recording angel registered to their credit in the golden book that they bought, among the trinkets to adorn their home, many sketches and finished portraits by fellow artists. So lavishly had they spent, that when Saskia, on her deathbed, willed what was left of her estate to the infant who had just made his advent, it was discovered Titus would be no millionaire.

With her usual generosity, she provided Rembrandt should have the income from the estate as long as he needed it, providing, however, he didn't marry, and kept everything intact for Titus.

Saskia's family retained the trusteeship. The luck of the van Uylenburgs deserted them, and, as the estate of Titus was largely in van Uylenburg paper, it shrivelled along with the family fortune. Rembrandt's income got smaller and smaller as his commissions also became fewer and fewer.

This went on for seven years, and then, of a sudden, the nurse

of the young Titus went insane and had to be committed to an asylum. In the readjustment of affairs at the Rembrandt home, it was discovered that the young maidservant, Hendrickje Stoffels, was nursing an infant daughter, and Rembrandt made no denial of paternity.

Saskia's relatives, who always had felt she had married beneath her station, became highly indignant. They accused Rembrandt of dissipating the fortune that had been left to Titus, and started court proceedings to take from the painter everything that was left and to secure the custody of Titus. They got judgment, and the house in the Jewish quarter, with all its art treasures and trinkets, was sold at auction, and the proceeds added to the estate of the boy, who was taken to live with the merchants.

Rembrandt took Hendrickje and their little Cornelia and plunged deeper into the ghetto, and here Hendrickje began that life of slavery and devotion to her god that has made her a legend. Not only did she work with her hands for their daily crust, but she urged him on and on in his art—deftly—a goad that was likewise an inspiration. Poor, untutored, illiterate, this girl yet comprehended his genius, believed in it, fought for it. Happily for her the painter was appreciative of her devotion, and returned her affection.

Perhaps the best commentary of the good qualities of Hendrickje—proof positive she is among the super-mistresses of history—is the attitude of Titus toward her.

The estate of Saskia was still in litigation—a long-drawn-out process of law. Rembrandt could not marry Hendrickje, as he early had purposed doing, without introducing further complications in the proceedings. Finally, after a dozen or so years, the matter was settled. Titus came of age and entered into his rights.

Then the young man, who had kept in as close touch as possible with his father and his father's mistress, came to live with them. Using his money, Titus set up an art shop, and took Hendrickje in legally as partner. Rembrandt was made expert adviser on salary. Cornelia, now a budding young lady, helped everybody. It was in this happy state of affairs that Hendrickje became the painter's wife, and Cornelia was made legitimate.

Any romance spinner, except grim fate, would leave them thus. Before a year elapsed, however, the faithful model-mistress was dead, and the year was just up when Titus went to join her. He loved as devotedly as did Rembrandt this irregular stepmother of his, and Rembrandt painted them together many times.

Rubens, too, had two wives, and they were his models. His magnificently voluptuous nudes attest their charms immortally. But there is none of the poignant tragedy in their stories we find in the romance of Rembrandt.

Rubens was a big, good-natured, boisterous, handsome chap—healthily vulgar and proud of it. He had models galore, as later did Renoir and Zorn. When he saw a robust, healthy young

woman, full of the vigor of life, his impulse was to ask her to take off her clothes and let him paint her—an invitation that is accepted perhaps as often as not when the right man makes it in the right tone of voice. Whether the models remain content with posing only is not to be inquired into too closely, and Rubens seems to have been lucky in getting a wife, on his first venture, with little inclination to investigate. She got her share of the glory of posing.

Isabella Brandt she was, and she was mature when Rubens married her. Rubens himself was well along in his thirties, famous in Antwerp, with Italian art conquests behind him, unusual at this period for painters of the north. He had never known poverty and never was to know it, and his riches were growing now along with his fame. He built for Isabella a magnificent house in the Italian style, and there he installed her along with art works he had brought out of Italy.

Isabella, though natively Flemish, was dark after the manner of Italian women, and it may have been this dark beauty that attracted Rubens to her in this state of his development. Believing, like most of the world, that the art of Italy was supreme, Rubens was doing Italian things, and scarcely had the wedding bells rung when the beautiful Isabella was naked on the model dais, posing for a Venus and a Susanna.

For half a dozen years or so, Isabella can be traced, along with a host of other models, but the Italian urge was wearing out, and

Rubens was developing those lusty blondes with big thighs and swelling breasts that were to give his genius distinctiveness and were afterward to become the goddesses of Renoir and Cézanne.

Rubens gradually evolved the type—and then a miracle happened. This type was well-developed—you see her in those three nudes in "The Landing of Marie de Médicis", which Cézanne was to carry about with him incessantly—when there was born into the world, in the rich family of Fourment, a girl baby they named Helena, destined to grow up and develop into exactly this type Rubens had created.

Isabella Brandt had been dead five years, and Rubens was fifty-five years old when he beheld Helena, plump, blonde and sixteen, and there was nothing to argue about—he must have Helena to wife. He seems to have wooed with the impetuosity of twenty, for the fair Helena succumbed to his charms, and thenceforth she was his model exclusively when a nude was to be done.

So proud of her figure was he, indeed, that he painted an acknowledged portrait of her with a fur coat flung loosely around her, hiding little more of her charm than does the hand of the Cnidian Venus—a portrait almost as nude as the Andromeda, for which she posed the same year.

It is almost unbelievable, the prophecy the magic nudes in the "Marie de Médicis" painting have of the delicious Helena.

Helena bore him two children, of whom he was extravagantly proud. Like the painters of old, he made a "Holy Family" of

them, with the other youngster playing around as Saint John. It is the most lusty, exuberant "Holy Family" in all the realm of art —full of life and the mischievous joy of life that a "Holy Family" ought to have. Patron saints like those might help fill up the churches in these jazz-mad days.

Helena Fourment was the happy climax of perhaps the sunniest life in all the annals of art.

## XV. HOW DIANE DE POITIERS SET A FASHION IN FRANCE THAT CULMINATED IN "OLYMPIA"

When Diane de Poitiers, mistress of King Henry II of the French, unveiled her dazzling charms before the eyes of the painter François Clouet and the sculptor Jean Goujon, she set a precedent that was to be followed, much to the enrichment of art, by many noble ladies in succeeding generations of France—Mme. de Montespan, Mme. de Pompadour, the Princess Pauline Borghese, who was Napoleon's sister, and Marie-Louise of Austria, his Empress.

Diane de Poitiers, one of the high queens in all the annals of the courtezans, makes her advent into history rather nobly. A girl of extraordinary beauty, she gave her virginity to King Francis I in exchange for the head of her father, the Seigneur of Saint-Vallier.

Tradition accords an excellent virtue to this king. When subjects were condemned to death for their crimes and misdemeanors, he scorned their money, no matter how wealthy, by way of remission. Simony was a dreadful sin in his eyes. But if the con-

demned happened to have a pretty young wife or a nubile daughter, he would see what he could do. If this wife or this daughter came voluntarily to Francis and found favor in his eyes, her beloved culprit had nothing more to fear. It was such a bargain Diane struck at the last hour, when everything else had failed, and the reprieve went post-haste to her father, reaching him after he had mounted the scaffold and while the executioner was adjusting the blindfold.

For King Francis, the youthful Diane was a passing fancy, but the young Dauphin took her up, and when he ascended the throne as Henry II, Diane became queen in fact, even though Catherine had the rank in name. Young King Henry made no secret of his preference for Diane over the crowned queen, and she was his companion openly in ceremonies of semi-state.

Queen Catherine, like the wife of Goya, was prolific in her breeding of children, and Henry managed to keep her occupied much of the time in bringing princes and princesses into the world. During the frequent periods when the official queen was not presentable, Diane openly assumed her place, and it is recorded naïvely by one historian that "Diane was not jealous of the Queen". It is to Diane's credit, even from the standpoint of conventional morals, that she carefully avoided humiliating Queen Catherine by word or by overt act.

"Happy is that King," rhapsodises Brantôme, in recording the

DIANE DE POITIERS AT THE BATH – *CLOUET* COOK COLLECTION, RICHMOND

*Portrait of the mistress of Henry II of France*

virtues of Diane, "who meets a good mistress, perfect and well accomplished, as it is in his power well to choose, for, being such, both he and his realm are none the worse off for it!"

The perfections of Diane are perhaps a little over-estimated, for she was not wholly faithful to the king, as he was not to her—Henry possessing a goodly seraglio.

But these two seem to have loved each other with a devotion even infidelity could not shake. Once, on a visit to her, Henry became aware a rival was hiding under her bed. He announced his discovery to the trembling pair by suddenly throwing a handful of the candy he and Diane were eating under the bed and exclaiming: "Take them, Brissac! Everybody must live." Then he quitted the room for a few minutes, giving the Marechal de Brissac time to dress and get out, returned to Diane, and never referred to the adventure again, either to his mistress or her clandestine lover.

Such generosity on the part of royalty is hardly paralleled, and Diane was equally generous to him—was she not tolerant even of Queen Catherine and the rapidly multiplying evidence of Henry's devotion to her?

Diane's act of undressing for Clouet and Goujon was no isolated phenomenon in this liberal and loose French court. Francis I and Henry II summoned to Paris the Italian artists who were painting such gay murals as Alexander VI was ordering for the Vati-

can, and the bolder and even more pagan pictures, if less sacrilegious, with which the Borgias and the Medici were adorning their great private palaces.

"The painters," records a contemporary French historian indignantly, "filled the apartments of our kings with paintings and with pictures in which were represented things not only lascivious but incestuous and execrable", and the sculptors carved "statues of bronze and of marble, of men as well as women, of gods and goddesses, in which lubricity triumphed".

Among the offenders in these matters are named Leonardo da Vinci (whose murals of this sort have perished with most of his other pictures, since he experimented unsuccessfully in mixing his own colors) and Benvenuto Cellini, some of whose finely wrought obscenities are still extant.

There was also being circulated at court a particularly racy book, the *Sonnets of Aretino,* with Figures by Marcantonio engraved after the lascivious paintings by Giulio Romano, whom we have already met as painting the love encounter of Jupiter and Olympias that resulted in Alexander the Great. It is disputed whether Aretino wrote the sonnets to fit Romano's paintings, or whether Romano visualized the poetic lucubrations of his renowned friend —the bosom friend, too, of Titian and of Pope Julius II.

"A gentleman whom I have heard named and whom I have known," relates Brantôme, "made one day a present to his mistress of a book of paintings, in which there were thirty-six ladies,

great ones of the court, painted naked, couched and playing with their servants, painted in the same fashion and *au naïf*. Some there were who had two or three servants, some more, some less. And these thirty-two ladies represented more than twenty-seven Figures of Aretino, all diverse. The personages were so well represented and *au naturel,* that it seemed they were talking and acting: some unclad and naked, the others clad, with the same robes, coiffures, adornments and vestments that they commonly wore and in which one sometimes saw them. The men were the same."

Whether Diane was one of these thirty-two nude models, it is not recorded. But it is plainly evident she had abundance of precedent, among ladies who might have snubbed the king's favorite had they dared, to disrobe herself for Clouet.

Clouet may have been trying to do a pornographic portrait of her for the king, as was the fashion. But if so, he succeeded in painting, instead, one of the most chaste—even though spirited —nudes in the history of art.

Diane and Clouet had precedent, too, for posing her as emerging from her bath—a milk bath was Diane's, by the way, according to tradition. In the castle of the Count of Chateauvillian there was a whole series of paintings, with ladies of the court as models —"very beautiful ladies naked at the bath".

This theme of nudes at the bath has never since been absent from French art—Degas and Renoir, in our own day.

Diane, besides posing as model, may have had something to do

with the excellence of Clouet's portrait. She, like the king, had discriminating taste in art, whatever may be said of their morals.

(Speaking, by the way, of Diane's morals, she may have agreed with one of Henry's other mistresses, proud of bearing him a son: "To sleep with the King is not a point of infamy—whores are those who give themselves to the small but not to great kings and gentlemen.")

Anagrams made from the names "Diane" and "Henri", which the two helped design, the king put everywhere—at the palace, at the Louvre and at Fontainebleau. He used them in the decorations of the royal apartments—even in the private rooms of the queen.

Diane, like Ninon de l'Enclos, preserved her fascination to the end—"love still nestled in her wrinkles", it was said of her, as Plato murmured of his old mistress Archænassa. Diane took a hint from the huntress goddess for whom she was named, in the matter of exercise, if not in chastity. She kept her beauty by rising every morning at six, summer or winter, taking a cold bath, and riding horseback for two or three hours. A bath at any time was regarded as sinful in those days, and a daily bath was an inspiration from the Devil himself—consequently Satan is to be given the credit for keeping her cheeks rosy to the last.

"I saw her," says Brantôme, "six months before her death, and she was still so beautiful that a heart of stone would have been moved at sight of her."

HELENA FOURMENT – *RUBENS* VIENNA MUSEUM

*Semi-nude portrait by the elderly painter of his girl wife*

Henry II was dead, and, despite the long disparity in their ages, she was reputed one of the mistresses of his son, Francis II. The first Francis, as a mature man, had harvested her bloom, scarcely mature. The bloom of the second Francis was hers, an old woman. It was the king in between who was her love partner.

When she was consigned to her grave, "It is a pity," mourns Brantôme, "for the earth to cover up such a beautiful form."

And what of Henry's wife—"poor wretch"?

She was that Catherine de Medici who was to rule France with such iron sway through the reigns of her sons, Francis II, Charles IX and Henry III—"a long regency filled with civil wars, religious troubles and bloody massacres".

Her docility under the supremacy of Diane—however sweet and considerate of her the royal whore may have been—is almost incredible, and demands the services of a psycho-analyst. Our guess is she had no love for the king—that she bore him a series of children, boys and girls, with little more sentiment for him than a mare has for a stud horse, foreseeing (as later did the prolific Queen Victoria of England) that a numerous brood would be valuable pawns in a game of European politics she felt sure she would ultimately play.

Diane went to her grave unmolested by Queen Catherine, now all powerful. The queen may even have had for her a queer sort of gratitude—from Diane she had learned how to rule. She improved on the lessons. She organized her maids of honor into a

"flying squadron", whose duty it was to seduce all men, rich and powerful, who came to court. She imparted to her maids "the wisdom and the cleverness to preserve the shape of their bellies". At one time her "flying squadron" and their allied prostitutes numbered fourteen thousand. It was a tyranny that matched the Pornocracy of Theodora of Rome, maker of Popes.

Queen Catherine de Medici seems not to have emulated Diane, however, in the vanity of being preserved in art for her feminine charms' sake. We do not recognize her as any nude goddess or nymph.

Great to the cause of religion was Diana of the Ephesians; greater to the cause of art was Diana of Poitiers.

## XVI. HOW FRANCE'S ROYAL COURTEZANS WASTED THEIR OLYMPIAN FIGURES ON STERILE ARTISTS UNTIL LA POMPADOUR ENCOUNTERED BOUCHER

Mistresses of succeeding French kings were less happy in their transformations into goddesses than Diane, not because they were too modest to pose in the nude, but because they were not lucky enough to encounter painters and sculptors of genius, until Madame de Pompadour met Boucher.

Gabrielle d'Estrées, favorite of Henry IV, had herself painted nude many times by the court painters, Raimond Dubreuil and Martin Freminet, entering or emerging from the bath, but it was largely love's labor lost so far as posterity is concerned, for these painters were uninspired as official painters are too apt to be. They belonged to what is known as the "Fontainebleau school"—native French artists aping the Italian masters, catching only the surface tricks without knowing what the soul of their art was about, just as our current Americans imitate the French.

But Gabrielle's attitude may have had something to do with the empty sentimentality of their pictures, preventing even an

accidental masterpiece like Clouet's great portrait of Diane.

For Gabrielle—courtezan though she was (she had been sold by her mother, at sixteen, to King Henry III, and all through her relationship with Henry IV she was also concurrently mistress of one of his most powerful nobles)—Gabrielle had a hypocritical sense of the decencies that made her an ideal whore for a Protestant king like Henry of Navarre. When painted nude by Freminet and Dubreuil, she always insisted that her children, too, be painted, playing around her feet. This was to prove she was no libertine—just a beauty posing unselfishly to help fill the world with pretty pictures.

Under conditions like that, it would be difficult for a Giorgione or a Titian to paint a masterly nude—a Manet or a Renoir wouldn't even try.

Gabrielle's children were three, and the big-hearted king acknowledged them all, though it was no secret from him nor from the rest of the French court that their mother was sleeping quite as frequently with the Duke de Bellegarde, her old lover whom she didn't have the heart to discard when she became officially the royal mistress. Ten times the king learned positively of clandestine meetings between Gabrielle and the duke, ten times he ordered the duke's head struck off, and ten times the repentant Gabrielle wheedled him back into good humor and had the order countermanded.

DIANA LEAVING THE BATH – *BOUCHER* LOUVRE

*La Pompadour posed nude for Diana*

Surely there were charms in this woman worthy of record by more skilled brushes than those of Freminet and Dubreuil.

The Protestant king had a mind to marry Gabrielle. His religion weighed heavy on his mind—not heavy enough to prevent him from having many mistresses, but enough to suggest marriage to each of the women who bore him children. Gabrielle came so dangerously near being made queen that her enemies were forced to poison her.

Not only did the king's irregularities in love prey on his own mind, but they set brooding the sombre mind of the religious fanatic Ravaillac, and certain of the keener historians, who look for something deeper in crime than politics, have connected up the assassination of the king with Henry's adulterous passion for the wife of his nephew, the Prince of Condé.

Henry had sought to keep at court, for his own pleasure, Charlotte-Marguerite, daughter of the Duke of Montmorency, whom he had first seen, a mere slip of a girl, dancing almost naked with other young women of the court in a ballet, one of the nymphs of Diana. Queen Catherine de Medici, a few years before, had inaugurated the custom of having young girls of gentle birth serve, quite naked, her guests at intimate feasts—the women guests themselves being stripped to the waists, their bosoms entirely bare. A slight reaction had set in, but in this ballet of Diana, the girls wore only the flimsiest of ribbons, and wore them scantily.

Many nobles of the court clamored for the hand of the bewitching Charlotte-Marguerite, but King Henry interviewed and commanded her marriage to his nephew. After the ceremony, when the king made known his purpose, he met with an unexpected obstacle on the part of the young prince, who had fallen in love with Charlotte. The king persisted angrily, and ultimately the youthful pair fled the court to escape Henry's importunities.

The episode became a public scandal, and the fanatic Ravaillac plunged his dagger into the hot heart of Henry of Navarre.

The lovely nymph, Charlotte-Marguerite, thus not only escaped the king, but she escaped, too, the king's painters, Freminet and Dubreuil.

There arose now in France two painters of genius—the first of the great French, except Clouet—Poussin and Claude Lorrain. Though they did an undraped figure now and then, they spent most of their time on landscapes, and they were not interested in the king's mistresses.

Certain proprieties, too, came into fashion. The aureole of a voluptuous breast might still be revealed in public, but the nipple was no longer regarded as feast for all eyes. Straightaway portraits were becoming more popular than transformations into Venuses and Dianas—portraits about as we have them today, showing generous expanses of flesh, but discreetly jealous of particular charms.

Mignard and Charles LeBrun found favor at court. Madame de

Maintenon, Madame de Sévigné, Madame de Montespan, Mademoiselle de la Vallière, Ninon de l'Enclos—all the gay courtezans of the time were content to let the flash of the eye or the arch of the neck tell their story of coquetry.

Madame de Montespan cheated a little—she posed as a naked nymph at Apollo's bath in one of the tiresome big canvasses of LeBrun, and both LeBrun and Mignard had discreet choice of maids of honor when they needed a model for Diana, Flora, or Venus.

Then, along came Watteau, who showed the court ladies how to be coquettish all dressed up as shepherdesses, and France was in that state of the insipid when François Boucher arrived.

Boucher brutally told Madame de Pompadour to strip if she expected to interest him, and then started at Versailles the wildest riot of nudity the French court had known since the days of Diane de Poitiers and Queen Catherine de Medici.

La Pompadour had employed Boucher to decorate the apartments at Versailles set aside for her by Louis XV. He already had accomplished spiritedly in the matter of nudes. La Pompadour, whose imagination jumped nimbly with his, suggested to his avid mind theme after amorous theme.

She herself had a marvelously rounded form, elegant neck and superb breasts, and Boucher elected her Venus and Diana. For retinue, La Pompadour gave him lavish and unrestricted choice of her ladies at Versailles, and thus came into being the most superbly

sensual nudes French art has produced, with the exception of those of Renoir.

Boucher's nudes were portraits—a generous share of them posed by La Pompadour herself. They were a first-rate scandal at the time in a Europe that was becoming largely Puritan, and there are many people who still regard Boucher's pictures as "the lowest depths of degradation" ever reached by a painter. Carlyle agreed with Diderot that utter debasement had here been achieved.

Among the nymphs celebrated by Boucher's brush was a girl of fifteen, named Vanbernier, whom La Pompadour had "fished, a common prostitute, out of the stews of Paris", as a present to King Louis. Like a wise mistress, La Pompadour knew she could hold her lover best by keeping him interested—wives do not get wise—Mme. Zola is the exception.

The little Vanbernier was extraordinarily beautiful. When La Pompadour finally was retired from the harem, she succeeded her as royal favorite, under the designation of Madame DuBarry.

DuBarry was done in the nude, too, in sculpture by Pajou—and Pajou was a disciple of Jean Jacques Rousseau!

Fragonard, favorite pupil of Boucher, bent gracefully to the storm of indignation his master had aroused, and, like Watteau, he put clothes back on the ladies of the court. He even persuaded La Pompadour to array herself in thin silks. He told the ladies how tempting was a pretty garter, or a little fluffy lingerie a bit

higher up the leg. Fragonard had a wife whom he loved—and a little sister-in-law, much younger, whom he was crazy about.

Greuze, also, was flourishing at this time, painter of nudes, but they were young girls as innocent as adolescents in their private bathrooms beyond the possible ken of prying eyes.

His psychology is interesting. He married at the outset of his art career a woman considerably older than himself, a bookseller of dissolute habits. She knew—and had experienced—everything there was to be known about life before he annexed her, and she persisted so determinedly in her way that the gentle painter, after a lengthy martyrdom, divorced her. Greuze spent his life painting the innocence he dreamed of before he was disillusioned.

## XVII. HOW THE MODEL OLYMPIA STEPPED DOWN FROM THE DAIS AND PICKED UP A PAINT BRUSH

THE court of Marie Antoinette did not persist long enough to nurture to maturity any magnificently wicked things like the nudes of Boucher or the pornographic murals of the reign of Diane de Poitiers.

The brutal revolutionists cut off the pretty, vain head of young Louis' queen before it had advanced in art appreciation beyond lavish jewelry or gorgeous fans. She liked Isabelle Vigée-LeBrun's pictures, maybe as much as she liked the pretty face of Isabelle herself, and the little LeBrun became favorite court painter. She was a pupil of Greuze, and even softer than Greuze—divinely feminine.

Isabelle's prettiness, too, was divine, and had she elected to be model instead of painter, her fame might be as enduring as "La Fornarina's" or the Duchess of Alba's. For, besides beauty, she had the magnetic qualities of the female to stir to highest creative energy a Raphael or a Goya. Her lovers were numerous. Scandal tossed her name lightly about. She challenged the most mischiev-

ous tongues by giving her celebrated Feast of Aspasia, at which the odes of Anacreon were sung, and maidens in filmy Greek tunics served grapes from Corinth, and Cyprian wine in cups brought from newly-excavated Herculaneum.

The business in art of such a woman is as model, not as painter —and the same may be said, perhaps, of all women artists of all time. They themselves recognize it instinctively, subconsciously. For they paint and draw and sculpture—themselves. Practically everything they accomplish of merit is Narcissian. And usually a man, with her as model, can do it better.

Even a feminine genius like Marie Laurencin attains as her highest pinnacle a peak in the foothills, whence a genius like Renoir starts for his climb up into the mountains. Renoir, decorating porcelain and painting fans in his youth, challenges the Laurencins, and the LeBruns, and the Morisots at the finish of their life work.

Visiting Naples, after the revolution had driven her from Paris, Vigée-LeBrun painted Lady Hamilton as a bacchante reclining on the seashore. The painting is unimportant, compared with Gainsborough's half-naked "Musidora Bathing Her Feet", for which this noble English courtezan, the mistress of Nelson, also posed—and British painters are not noted for losing their heads in the presence of queens of love.

Many and pretty are the nude females that women artists have painted throughout history, especially in our own time and with

the "new freedom"—but a great nude, as the Cnidian Venus is great, or the Venuses of Giorgione, Titian and Velasquez, or the "Maja" of Goya, or the "Olympia" of Manet, or any one of a dozen of Renoir's portraits of the nurse-girl Gabrielle is great, no woman has yet wrought, nor even approximated.

Nor has any woman ever done a male nude of any importance whatsoever. They can catch expertly sometimes the foibles of a girl, but anything savoring of masculinity seems to be beyond their grasp.

Suzanne Valadon's nude women in our own day are an approximation toward male insight, but only in about the same measure that the novels of George Eliot and Georges Sand approach Thackeray and Stendhal. It may be, when time comes for identification, Madame Valadon will live longest in art history as the circus acrobat who became model for Renoir, Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec, and attained in her bohemian days the motherhood of her genius son, Maurice Utrillo. Degas and Lautrec, discovering an unusual talent in her as an artist, gave her instruction, but, highly as she has developed, she echoes them no more importantly than Berthe Morisot echoes Manet.

The psychology that goes into the making of a great female nude is not the female psychology in any of its many bizarre manifestations. The model, as I believe I have shown repeatedly during the course of this book, must be felt as feminine before she can be laid on canvas or carved in marble. Even the Lesbian, though she

PAULINE BONAPARTE – *CANOVA* BORGHESE PALACE, ROME

*The Emperor's sister, then Princess Borghese, posed nude for this famous reclining Venus*

be man in quality, is not man of the requisite intensity. The great nudes have an epic grandeur—a Sappho of paint could scarcely go beyond a lovely lyricism.

But, though they have accomplished nothing first-rate in the art of the nude—and, congenitally, never can accomplish such—women artists, who will persist as such instead of mounting the model stand, are not shut out from an exquisite prettiness, that is, for example, LeBrun's and Laurencin's.

The most enticing of the nudes that have been painted by women have a quality of graceful loveliness such as an enthusiastic college girl wraps round her "crush". Nearly always is there a suggestion the model has just slipped off her clothes—a consciousness that her skin is aglow with desire for a caress—Narcissian? The psychology of these "crush" paintings is sometimes too elfin for male genius to duplicate—perhaps even comprehend. Sometimes there is a little twinkle of satiric wisdom—the girls of Marie Laurencin.

Then, there is a class of nudes painted by women which have a directly opposite psychological origin—a nude arising out of a soul that holds a "crush" in irritated contempt. This nude is apt to have some deformity—a leg viciously twisted, an arm tightly restrained in an uncomfortable position, a breast too heavy. Her painter endows her with an internal hell fire for the punishment of any sin she is about to commit.

Vigée-LeBrun is perhaps the healthy, happy type of the female

artist—skilled enough to command gratifying praise for her talent, pretty enough to have all men at her feet, intelligent enough to appreciate that much that is said to her is deserved praise, and of disposition sunny enough not to look too closely into lavish flattery. But wasn't the Duchess of Alba equally blessed?

## XVIII. HOW NAPOLEON'S SISTER AND HIS EMPRESS SOUGHT OLYMPIAN IMMORTALITY IN PAINT AND MARBLE

THE red deluge of the Revolution swept everything away—the fumblings-in-plaquets of Fragonard, the twaddle of Greuze, the pretty insipidities of Vigée-LeBrun. Marie Antoinette, with all her vanities, had no chance to become Venus.

Then came Napoleon, and there arrived a time in the base-born Corsican's life when it seemed more important in his eyes to prove to the world that he was Emperor by right of taste than by might of sword. He married an Archduchess out of haughty Austria and hired a court painter. The court painter, David, exhausted his genius on stupidities.

But there was a sculptor in Italy doing marvelous things in marble—a genuine rebirth of the golden age of Greece, so his enthusiasts said.

The Emperor's beautiful sister, Pauline Borghese, stretched naked before him on a couch, as the female Borgias and Medici of her native (and adopted) Italy had done, and Canova did a

portrait of her in marble that frankly bears her name. She posed for him, too, as Venus—striking the attitude of Phryne—and the Borgian Venus is the most spirited avatar of the Cnidian Venus the modern world boasts.

Pauline's naïve astonishment is famous. When asked how she could pose thus naked for Canova she replied: "Why, the studio was warm! There was a stove!"

Her naïveté may have been a little overdone. The story that Napoleon's mother and his sisters helped him along financially in his struggling young military days in Paris by operating a brothel there, with the girls among the charming stock in trade, may be ascribed to the malice that dogged the Emperor's footsteps constantly from the first moment of his dazzling rise. But there is plenty of cooler evidence that Pauline was neither a virgin when she took her first marriage vows nor ever observed those vows virtuously. The chances are her pulses missed no beats when she disrobed in front of Canova and his stove.

Marie-Louise of Austria, who succeeded Josephine as Empress of the French, was not behind her sister-in-law in patronage of the arts. In the Wallace Collection, London, is a "Venus and Adonis" by Prud'hon, and there is a tradition that Marie-Louise sat to the painter for the nude Venus. She may have done so under direction of the Emperor. For the canvas was painted in 1810, the year of her marriage, and the beauty of Venus is the vibrant beauty of Marie-Louise in her honeymoon days.

BATHSHEBA – *REMBRANDT* LOUVRE

*Portrait of the artist's mistress and second wife, Hendrickje Stoffels*

Considerations of the virtue of Marie-Louise need not stand in the way of acceptance of the tradition. She was of the gallant house of Hapsburg, to start with—but, more particularly, after the exile of Napoleon to St. Helena, Marie-Louise, now Duchess of Parma, became the mistress of her statesman in chief, General Neipperg, bore him two children while her imperial husband, from whom she never was divorced, was alive, and was pregnant with a third when the Emperor died. Napoleon's last wish—he did not know of her infidelity (nor, for that matter, did Marie-Louise's own father)—was that his heart be sent to her in a capsule.

Prud'hon's inspiration for painting the nude is interesting. He made a hasty marriage in his youth to a pretty, half-mad girl, who became quite insane. Under no law then existing could he free himself. A girl friend, who was his model, Constance Mayer la Martinière, consented to live with him. This was the arrangement when Marie-Louise took the painter under her patronage.

With the fall of the Empire, Prud'hon lost favor in Paris. Poverty became his lot, and his mistress was slighted and insulted. In 1821 she took poison and died. Prud'hon followed her to the grave two years later—"broken heart", is the verdict of the coroner's jury of romance.

## XIX. OF THE ODALISQUE OF INGRES WHOM THE OLYMPIA OF MANET DIRECTLY CHALLENGED

INGRES worked for forty years on that nude of his—famous as "La Source" on a million post-cards—and then, like Leonardo da Vinci and "Mona Lisa", gave her up in despair unfinished.

Who was her model?

Nobody—just as nobody was the model for "Mona Lisa", least of all La Gioconda, who sat day after weary day for Leonardo for four years. It was not La Gioconda's smile Leonardo was trying to fix, even though he may have thought it was, but a tantalizing smile peeping at him now and then out of his subconscious.

So it was with "La Source". Forty years is the lifetime of a long succession of models. No woman retains for more than a few fleeting weeks or even days the freshness that has just blossomed that Ingres sought to catch.

Somewhere, in the lower depths of his consciousness, Ingres desperately held onto a vision he had had of this blooming—a

girl he had known—maybe a virgin just before defloration. For forty years he tried to fix this vision in paint.

Outwardly controlled, many are the mistresses assigned to Ingres. But there are no picturesque scandals, as in the case of Goya, just passing from the scene in neighboring Spain. The mistresses of Ingres were of the type even a sailor could pick up—strollers, street-walkers, shop-girls.

But, the girl Vanbernier was from such rank as these, and she afterward ruled France as the dazzling DuBarry, so why may not Ingres have found inspiration for "La Source" in one of his chance pick-ups when the fire of youth was hot in him? Maybe it was a girl no older than Vanbernier, fifteen, and not half so sophisticated.

But her charm vanished into the limbo of prostitute vulgarity before Ingres could record it completely, and vainly for twoscore years he sought to recapture it from many successive street-walkers whom he accompanied to cheap lodgings in the hope that he would find under her clothes what she promised in the street.

The fact that she was forty years in the making is the chief interest of "La Source". What she might have been had Ingres been able to dash her off in the first white heat of creation—as Giorgione dashed off his Venus—we can never know, but visual evidence is as eloquent as tradition in pronouncing her, as she looks from the walls of the Louvre, a noble experiment gone stale.

The "Odalisque" is more successful, even if no supremely great

achievement. She is a creature of the stews of Paris amalgamated with houris from the harems of North Africa, and then chastened into a form dictated by classic good taste.

The fires of the "Odalisque" were hot enough to flush the face of indignant Paris on her first showing, but there was no feeling that Ingres had pried the lid off of hell—as Manet was to do a few years later with "Olympia"—and so, in time, the fever cooled, and the "Odalisque" was duly accepted. Then, the unimaginative Salon painters, seeing she was a success, began to imitate her, and it was partly as a defiant challenge to these imitators that Manet promulgated "Olympia".

Of late in Paris—since Picasso—the Modernists whose wells of inspiration are down to the muddy dregs, are turning once more to Ingres' "Odalisque".

Ingres married while a student in Italy. He did not court his bride. She was sent down to him from Paris—"a good match"—neither had seen the other. He accepted her in good faith as a wife, and continued to run around with his street-walkers. His was a sensual nature, but fire burning under ice. He did not paint his models direct. He studied them intently and then dismissed them, painting from a tenacious memory, as later Rodin recorded in marble.

In the interval between Ingres with his "Odalisque" and Manet with his "Olympia", Paris had another sensation, Gustave Cour-

bet, a sort of rugged prophet in the wilderness preparing for the coming of a greater painter—but no unworthy painter-prophet on his own account.

Bourgeois though Ingres was, mingling with street girls and recording their charms instead of immortalizing the courtezans of the court, as did Boucher, this new Courbet was to be even more vulgar. Ingres was restrained by a classic sense, acquired from Napoleon's David, that kept his art within the bounds of tradition, however much, like Courbet, he belied those bounds with an energetic spirit trying to break out.

But Courbet threw off all restraint. There are no such creatures as nymphs and goddesses, said he, and if a girl chooses to bound naked through a French forest or lie unclothed on French grass, why paint her that way!

That was Courbet's philosophy and he stuck to it. And one of these days those terrific, healthy prostitutes he painted are going to be esteemed masterworks of creative art. Somehow, the world, after a hundred years, hasn't succeeded in shaking off the feeling that Courbet was the unspeakable boor his Paris contemporaries esteemed (or disesteemed) him—just as we can't seem quite to dislodge our prejudices against Boucher and his hoydenish maids of honor (or dishonor).

The difference between Courbet and a "gentleman" is graphically illustrated through his portrait of Whistler's Jo. The girl Jo, who was Whistler's companion in the Latin Quarter of Paris

in his student days, and who remained with him as model and sharer of his living quarters for many years in London, posed for Whistler's famous "Little White Girl".

But Courbet knew better. He was a friend of their Paris days and often a visitor at their apartment. He painted Jo, too, and that portrait, "La Belle Irlandaise", is one of the tremendous things of modern times, with its masses of glorious red hair. It is almost unbelievable that the fair, sad, spiritual "White Girl" is the healthy, hoydenish "Irish Beauty".

Jo, who is preserved like a fine piece of old lace in the lavender perfume of the Whistler tradition, lived with that painter until his mother, forsaking America, joined him in London. The model Maud was her successor when Whistler resumed his bachelor status. Neither Jo, nor Maud, nor the Japanese model affected much the course of Whistler's art. They were just little carriers of incense burners that helped wreath the perfumed, self-invented halo around the head of the painter who sued Ruskin for calling him a coxcomb and was awarded damages of one farthing—too much money.

Jo will live long and sentimentally as "The Little White Girl", but maybe, as "La Belle Irlandaise" she will take her place eventually, in a more understanding future, as a queen of love. It may be that Courbet, with his animal instincts, sensed in her a magnificence that Whistler missed—dilettante in love as in art.

Courbet was intentionally insolent in painting his nudes, just

as he studied to offend in things like "A Funeral at Ornans". For the naturalism of the "Funeral" we have long since forgiven him —enthusiastically. We don't forgive nor forget vulgarity so soon in the case of nudity. Let him paint prostitutes, say we broad-mindedly, if he wanted to—but why put stockings on them, flaunting their profession? Courbet, like Boucher, must wait another century for complete vindication.

## XX. HOW NAPOLEON III WASTED HIS OLYMPIAN GODDESSES ON SALON ARTISTS

THOUGH the Emperor Napoleon III, by establishing the Salon des Refusés in 1863, performed the overt act that smashed the authority of the Academy and paved the way for Modernism, he did it quite blindly and as a matter of political expediency and not because of any art insight he possessed.

Had the new Napoleon had an art feeling at all comparable with that of the Medici or the Borgias, he might have made the court of the Second Empire one of the splendid art oases of the ages. The painters were at hand—Manet, Degas, Renoir, Cézanne—no younger nor any more obscure than was Raphael when Pope Julius II called him to Rome nor than Botticelli when Lorenzo the Magnificent found him, and no less rich in promise. A newspaper art critic, Emile Zola, could see the new men—Napoleon III could not.

The new Emperor was as obtuse to art as was the first Napoleon, and he relied on the authority of his Minister of the Fine Arts, M. de Nieuwerkerke, "who, as a matter of fact," says a capable

critic of the period, "knew as much about art as a cat knows about music"—the ideal type, in other words, for art director either of a nation or a great museum.

Under Nieuwerkerke's capable advice, Napoleon strung along with the Salon lights, with Bouguereau, Cabanel, Baudry and the rest. All around him was the dawn of a new art renaissance comparable with the ruddy glow that, in Italy, dispelled the darkness of the Middle Ages, but the Emperor kept his face steadily toward the west, and wore docilely the blinders provided him by Nieuwerkerke.

Nor did the court of the Second Empire lack the great courtezans who could have furnished inspiration for the artists—imagine what Renoir might have done with the skin of Virginie Marchesa di Castligione, so velvety white that she usually went to bed naked on black linen sheets in order that she and the Emperor might feast their eyes on her loveliness—she getting even a greater delight out of the spectacle than he. But it was Paul Baudry who was permitted to record her beauty, full length, instead of Renoir.

"She found the portrait so lovely," writes an enthusiast for the style of Baudry, Bouguereau and Cabanel, "that she was jealous of it. She cut up the canvas with scissors and threw it into the fire."

This is an expert commentary on the intelligence and taste of Madame de Castiglione, Italian beauty, chief ornament of the

court of Napoleon, and a courtezan whose charms are comparable with those of Phryne and Simonetta.

"Silly as a frog, but chatterboxes like that keep their lovers for a long time," remarks one of the acute observers of the Italian nymph. "Tell me when to applaud," she whispered to her escort at a concert, "for I know nothing about it." "She is too beautiful," said a diplomat, "and very happily, she is beautiful only." "Insignificant and insipid", was Napoleon's own irritated opinion of her, but he couldn't escape the fascination of her skin.

It was women like that Renoir delighted to paint—he had the utmost contempt for feminine intellect—only a dazzling feminine body interested him. The Castiglione found Baudry's counterfeit too lovely—she wouldn't have been capable of grasping Renoir's.

"The proud Countess wears no stays," writes a diarist of the Second Empire, commenting on her appearance as the "Queen of Hearts" at a diplomatic ball in 1857. "She would pose with pleasure to some Phidias, if such a one could be found in these days, and she would be clad in her beauty only."

Rodin was in Paris—maybe a little young, only seventeen, but already showing a genius the Medici would have sensed. And then there was Carpeaux in the vigor of his prime—Carpeaux came afterward into Napoleon's ken, to the discomfiture of the Emperor, as we shall presently see.

"All but naked", she appeared in another costume ball two years later at court, with a retinue of youthful high-born beauties,

arrayed as "courtisanes", reminiscent of the days of Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Medici. "She allowed us to admire her divine perfections," remarks the broad-minded Marquis de Massa.

"The Empress had left the ball", probably on suggestion of Napoleon, who had no love secrets from her, having married her in the maturity of them both, and with an understanding as to the unmolested continuance of his harem. "There was an indescribable tumult at Madame de Castiglione's entrance. She was surrounded; everyone tried to get near her. Women, losing their heads and forgetting all about etiquette, stood on the chairs to be able to get a sight of her; as for the men, they were hypnotised."

Think of the stupidity of Napoleon in having failed to reserve a choice seat for the young Renoir! You can't imagine a Medici neglecting thus his Botticelli.

Many artists painted her, among them Giraud, pet painter of Napoleon's cousin Mathilde (once his fiancée and, queerly enough, devoted to the Castiglione). At the Exhibition of 1900, the faded old beauty "wanted to reserve a special room in which five hundred portraits of herself should be on view". The unimaginative authorities didn't grant her wish, and she died anyhow before the exhibition opened. She was buried in the filmy chemise Napoleon had stripped from her lovely body that first night together forty-two years before.

The Empire had been dead for thirty years, the Emperor nearly as many, and the painters who had sought to fix her charms were

all already in the shadows of the approaching oblivion. Madame de Castiglione, like her imperial lover, had not had the art intelligence to choose any one of a half dozen painters and sculptors who could have made deathless the beauty of which they both were so proud.

The Castiglione was a better chooser of lovers. Besides the Emperor, she was recognized mistress intermittently of the bankers J. LaFitte and Baron Alphonse Rothschild, of the Ducs d'Aumale and de Chartres, and of General Estancelin. She was Lord Herford's, too, for one night—a night she stole away from the Emperor himself—and legend is that the fee the rich Englishman paid her was a million francs.

Napoleon himself could be a little extravagant when a high price was placed on hidden charms by a beauty he wanted, but there is no record that he thought in millions. For one divine night with the daughter of the painter Pomeyrae, he is said to have paid her twenty-five thousand francs. That is about as far as Napoleon III ever went intelligently in his patronage of the works of a painter.

The Carpeaux story is amusing. Marguerite Bellanger is the heroine, another of Napoleon's many mistresses, and, in ways, more interesting than the Castiglione. She was roughneck and rowdy, with a coarse and brilliant wit that scintillated as dazzlingly and unabashed in the presence of the Emperor as in a

bawdy exchange of repartee with the Emperor's stable groom, whose mistress Margot was before Napoleon invited her to his own bed.

Her introduction to the Emperor was characteristic. After being a maid servant, she had turned circus acrobat for a time—among her many accomplishments was the ability to spring to her feet with one bound from lying prone on her back. Napoleon's groom, knowing the Emperor's love of a laugh, presented Margot to him one day, entering the room walking on her hands, careless of her clothing, "showing all her fascinations". Her entrance was a triumph, and Napoleon found her flippancy of tongue as amusing as her acrobatics.

The groom seems to have felt as flattered as Margot that the Emperor decided to take her into his own seraglio. The court soon was laughing with Napoleon over her antics. He usually was more discreet—he had learned Puritanic hypocrisy from his mysterious English mistress, Miss Howard, and he found it a valuable asset in dealing with his beloved subjects, the rank and file of whom had caught a whiff of Victorian England even through the stiff breezes of the Channel.

Now for the Carpeaux story. A friend of the sculptor sought out the Minister of Fine Arts and advised him to buy the busts of four women Carpeaux had completed. Nieuwerkerke saw the busts, "representing four seasons", and was so enthusiastic he decided the Empress should have them for her own collection, and

so invited her and Napoleon to go with him and look at them.

"Their Majesties did not admire them for long; the Emperor withdrew stroking his moustache, the Empress was in a rage and banged the door. The four busts represented Marguerite Bellanger, the Emperor's latest fancy, in four different positions."

The Empress was broadminded about her husband's mistresses, but Margot and her acrobatic antics were a little strenuous for her nerves.

Carpeaux wasn't in on the "joke" and flew into a rage when he found out about it. Nieuwerkerke was stupidly unaware that Marguerite was the model. The sculptor's friend had deliberately got even with the Minister for a social slight.

Margot bore the Emperor a son, who became a factor in restoration intrigues following the fall of the Empire.

Numerous, varied and sometimes fantastic were the mistresses of Napoleon III, and his court, like the courts of Louis XV and Henry II, might have been redeemed in the eyes of posterity had there been a Clouet or a Boucher to turn its sins to art account. These sins were not flaunted so boldly in the public face, as Henry's and Louis' had been, since Napoleon felt insecure on his throne. Though the Empire was founded in revolution, he sought to strengthen the foundation with props of conservatism and propriety. He gave way to the radical artists in 1863, giving them their Salon des Refusés, rather than risk a street brawl, always dangerous in Paris, but once they were satisfied and calmed down,

he forgot them and their art as he forgot all other rebel nuisances.

Art is a vital factor in France. Napoleon entrusted its guidance to a safe politician, and when he had to encounter art personally, he encountered it in accordance with his Minister's advice.

Napoleon III lives forever, however, in sculpture. The little statue is the work of an artist equally skilled as a painter and as a maker of powerful black and white drawings, known to the Emperor only as an annoying newspaper caricaturist. Daumier detested Napoleon as Napoleon detested him—and produced "Ratapoil". The Emperor gave the sculptor no sittings—his lackeys would have horsewhipped the newspaper rascal had he shown his face at the Tuileries.

But aside from "Ratapoil" and one of the Carpeaux busts of Margot, the court of Napoleon III is singularly barren of art. It was a new age. Artists no longer were dependent on courts, even though the financial struggle was hard. Manet, Renoir, Degas, Cézanne were coming into their own quite without the grace of a gracious Prince.

## XXI. OF THE TRIUMPH OF THE HARLOT OLYMPIA

MANET'S "Olympia", though born amid the glory of the Second Empire, was not one of the courtezans of the brilliant court of Napoleon, but a plebeian harlot. As such she was of greater service to art—she could proclaim brazenly the new freedom.

Since "Olympia", the world has made rapid and amazing progress in glorifying the female nude—not as a goddess nor a nymph to be worshipped in awe afar off, but as frankly human, with all the refreshing sins of a woman not blotted out by her virtues. All her tricks have been discovered, all her wiles recorded, and with so much genius that she has been accepted in all her moods, in all her poses, as a creature of art and not of pornography.

These threescore years since the Salon of 1865, where "Olympia" was displayed, have been extraordinarily prolific in the picturing of the nude. Renoir, in the glorious freedom won by Manet, did a thousand, and scores of his thousand surpass the one nude of Velasquez. Then, there have been Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, Daumier, Corot, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Matisse, Rouault,

ODALISQUE – *INGRES* LOUVRE

*Model unknown. Probably a street walker of Paris, this painter's favorite source of feminine beauty*

Picasso—all great masters of the nude, besides hundreds of lesser men among the painters—and those other masters among the sculptors, Rodin, Maillol, Archipenko, Brancusi.

Relationship between artist and model during this latter-day period, obviously, is not to be discussed as frankly as we have been re-examining those scandals now congealed in the old lava streams of history. It is the unwritten law of "secret memoirs" that they must be laid in a vault for a century in manuscript before being put in type—half a century, at least.

Dealing in generalities, it may be said that with the demand for more models—for more and ever more types, modest, aristocratic, hoydenish, rustic, sophisticated—the demand has been fully met and with a large, disappointed surplus. Professional models in Paris a few months ago raised a great outcry that the amateur volunteers are driving them out of business. The profession of the artists' model is becoming as precarious as the profession of the prostitute.

The tendency noted in Paris by Felicien Rops in the day when Bouguereau and Cabanel were flooding the world with their smooth nudes has become an avalanche. Rops, as we have already recorded, pictured a mother presenting her naked young daughter to Cabanel to be glorified. Our present-day fashionable painters of the nude, in America as well as abroad, are beset with young women anxious to display their Venus shapes to the world through paint. Ask the fashionable photographers, too—one in New York

is said to have got rich recording the nude charms of brides for preservation for the delectation of their husbands in the coming days when those charms begin to wither. Ask Hollywood, too—ask the producers of great musical shows—everywhere the flesh markets are open, there is a liberal supply of young female charm.

Occasionally there is a quarrel, and something gets into the papers long before the time for breaking the seals of the "secret memoirs". There is the instance—typical—of the French actress, Mlle. Edmonde Guy, who posed for Kees Van Dongen, the Dutch painter of the nude, for about as frank a portrait as has ever been done. It was a magnificent work—rich and racy besides being substantial as art. A wealthy Frenchman bought it for half a million francs, and Mlle. Guy flew into a rage, personal and legal. "An unsuccessful admirer", she furiously dubbed the purchaser, who thenceforth was to be permitted to gaze on the likeness of all the charms she had denied him, and she sued Van Dongen.

The German actress, Anita Berber, has been as lavish with her charms in the studio as has Mlle. Guy, and there is extant a lithograph by Charlotte Berend as bold as the Van Dongen portrait of the beautiful Parisian.

Ours is a franker age than many an age that has gone before, so that in the case of some of the elder of our modern masters we already have about all the scandal that the "secret memoirs" are likely to reveal a century hence. Van Gogh and Gauguin, for ex-

ample, put their own reddest sins on paper; Renoir was a blithe, joyous pagan like Rubens, and so didn't care what the world found out about him—and precious little there was to discover to his discredit; while Degas and Cézanne were "woman haters", and when they grumbled the world quickly got next to their complexes.

Degas, growling because it was necessary to have nude models if he wanted to paint nudes at their tubs, and testily and curtly ordering the poor girls to "Get undressed!" without even bidding them "Good morning!" may have got some of his bad manners from his idol, Ingres. But mostly he was just a fussy old bachelor, with an inferiority complex, getting in the first growl before his model could tell him what she thought of him.

"Is that my nose, Monsieur Degas?" one of them had the temerity to ask him one day. "My nose was never like that."

Whereupon, relates Vollard, she was put out of the room without further ado and her clothes thrown after her.

Proof positive he was a Freudian inferior.

"It is almost a commonplace that Degas had a peculiar hatred of women," Vollard elsewhere says by way of analysis. "Yet on the other hand, no one loved women as he did; but a kind of shame or modesty in which there was something like fear, kept him away from them. It is this prudish trait in his nature which explains in part the sort of cruelty which often led him to depict women at the most intimate moments of their toilet."

"What about yourself, Monsieur Degas? Why haven't you ever married?" Vollard asked him one day courageously.

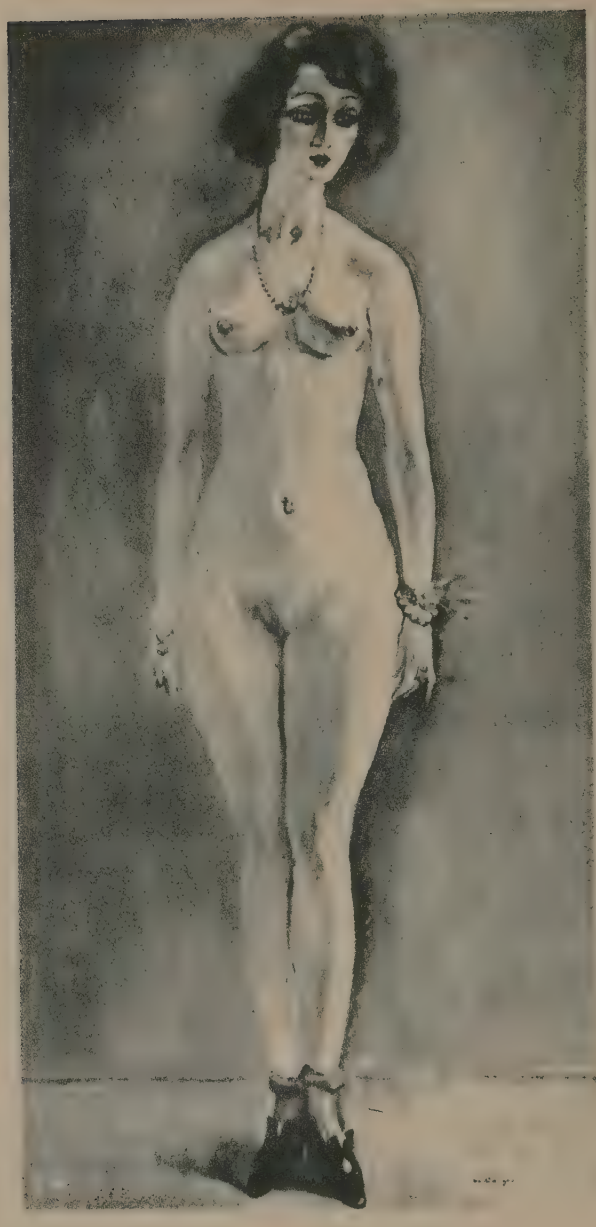
"I, marry? Oh, I could never bring myself to do it. I would have been in mortal misery all my life for fear my wife might say, 'That's a pretty little thing', after I had finished a picture."

Degas was cruel sometimes in revenge for the shabby trick nature had played on him, making him afraid of women—him, of all men, to whom this same nature had assigned the urge to paint the girls of the ballet.

He had a beautiful model once, with rare treasures that made her a veritable Venus Callipyge. He lavishly praised her possessions, purposely exciting her vanity to so high a pitch that she went about raising her skirts, showing to all who would look how nature had blessed her.

"The shame or modesty in which there was something like fear" was even more intensified in the case of Cézanne, so that it was a torture for him to do what weighed upon him as his duty toward nudity. The nude was a high and holy ingredient of the art that was poor Cézanne's religion, and so he must manage some way to contribute his share.

He thought Manet's "Olympia" was "a good job", despite certain truckling to tradition, and he undertook to remedy his friend's defects with an "Olympia" of his own. So crude, despite its strength, is Cézanne's version, that the critics are still undecided



PORTRAIT OF THE ACTRESS MLLE. GUY–*VAN DONGEN*

COURTESY THE ARTIST

*One of the most sensational and daring of contemporary portraits*

whether Cézanne meant it for a serious work or a caricature.

An "Olympia" with any of the calm spirit of Manet's cool harlot would have been quite beyond Cézanne at any period of his life, and not only in the days when the Manet picture was the rage of Paris.

For Cézanne was so bashfully nervous in the presence of even the most nonchalant and businesslike of professional girl models that he could not control his brush. After his student days, he gave up the attempt, and when he needed nude females in his canvases he painted them from pictures in his sister's fashion magazines, or, more generally and more particularly, from a crude reproduction of the three Sirens in Rubens' "Landing of Marie de Médicis". This reproduction was pinned to his studio wall or, when he went traveling, he carried it in his pocket.

Cézanne usually was content with an abstraction of female nudity, but when he needed some particular anatomical feature, he had his wife pose for him, or, sometimes, an old washerwoman, his wife's servant, with charms no longer fresh and exciting enough to make his hand tremble. The greatness of his female nudes lies elsewhere than in sensuality. They are always part of a bigger structure—stolid pillars in the temple of Venus, not eager priestesses at her shrine.

It was for Renoir to do these priestesses, and so exquisite was his skill at sublimation that they have all the spiritual innocence of

the acolyte without losing the magnetism of the initiated devotee. You can't imagine them refusing anything to fiery males smashing rudely into the temple—but without sin and without guile. Maybe Renoir, without knowing it, caught the psychology of the Vestal Virgins. Maybe, more surely than Raphael's "La Fornarina", his models were fitted for a series of Madonnas.

Renoir's favorite models were the nursemaids of his children. Chief among them was Gabrielle, heroine of scores of his most glorious canvases, and chosen to pose, too, as "Venus", when the master, in advanced age, turned to sculpture. She is that curiously ugly-beautiful human animal, with the low forehead, large eyes, short turned-up nose, "her lips half open like blossoming flowers. You may blame or you may congratulate him on what there is of the animal in her," remarks François Fosca, "but how well her creator knows how to set forth her compelling charm."

Gabrielle, like his other maids, was of the people.

"I don't know how artists can paint those over-bred females they call society women!" Renoir exclaimed to Vollard. "Some of our servants have had admirable figures, and have posed like angels. But I must admit I am not hard to please. I had just as lief paint the first old crock that comes along, just so long as she has a skin that takes the light."

But Virginie Marchesa di Castligione, mistress of his Emperor, had a skin that "took the light", and in her presence Renoir might

have forgotten his prejudice against "those over-bred females they call society women".

A necessity for their choice as nursemaids for his children was that these girls must have velvety bodies. Such bodies Renoir wanted within instant reach when the spirit moved him to paint. Zorn was that way, too. His best model was his cook, Ida, not very attractive in her kitchen togs, if etchings of her thus arrayed are to be believed, but a magnificent animal when she stepped nude into the sunlight. Zorn, no more than Renoir, was enslaved to one model, but Ida kept his mind at ease, always within reach, as was Renoir's Gabrielle.

Renoir never lost his admiration for a skin that would "take the light"—indeed it strengthened as age overtook him, and long after there could be any suspicion of intrigue with his housemaids, it amounted to an obsession.

He did his greatest nudes, indeed, after gout had so crippled his legs as to confine him to a wheel chair and his wrists as to make it necessary for an assistant to strap his brush to the back of his hand.

"To paint a woman excites him more than if he were caressing her," declared his painter friend Joyant, who had watched him at work.

Feminine skin of a velvety transparency, with red blood tingling just beneath, became a fetish—a visual fetish, not manual—

and the extraordinary power of Renoir's nudes, innocent as they are, to stir the blood to a sort of sensual worship, developed instinctively. Renoir's nudes are unique in art of all time. They alone possess a highly potent sensuality unaccompanied by either pornography or sentimentality.

The sculptor Rodin shared with Renoir and Zorn a fine zest for the nude without complicating factors of prudery. Like them he could look, as an artist, on their naked charms with a lively intellectual curiosity and sexual nonchalance. Like them, too (in youth, at any rate), he could forget he was an artist and became a lover.

Rodin, commanding comparative wealth, assembled a little company of the choicest models Paris afforded, male and female, and had them stroll about in his studio doing anything they pleased, striking any attitude that suggested itself spontaneously, and when something occurred that interested him, he would make a lightning sketch in crayon. The sketch was just a short-hand note, often tossed to the floor as soon as done, and forgotten. It impressed the pose on his memory. When it came time for him to model a figure, he referred neither to his sketch nor to the girl nor the man who had struck the pose. His memory was vividly photographic, holding every detail of the figure he had observed.

What wouldn't Degas or Cézanne have given for a tenth of the ease in presence of an unclothed female model Renoir and Rodin possessed?

Or Van Gogh?

Van Gogh's case was more unfortunate than that of either Degas or Cézanne. He had a village deacon's horror of a naked woman—and a village deacon's fearful longing. Always was the Holy Ghost stalking behind him ready to pitch him into hell fire. And like the village deacon, Van Gogh fled when he could—to a brothel, in the trembling thought that the spy of God wouldn't dare smirch his skirts following him there.

Yet Van Gogh managed to do some of the stormiest of modern nudes, so tempestuous, indeed, that they are seldom displayed.

One, however, is fairly familiar, a picture he called "Sorrow", painted in the days when he was an evangelist among the Belgian miners—days of youth and of the most violent battle God and Satan have fought for the possession of a human soul since Job.

The fight ended in a draw—Van Gogh continued to preach the gospel of God, but he entered into a life of Satan's own sin with a professional prostitute.

Let us look at her in flashes—in a few sentences lifted from Meier-Graefe's prolonged, fascinating account, based principally on Van Gogh's published letters:

"In January he met another such woman"—the young evangelist had come to regard whores as his sisters, working men as his brothers, in his labors for the salvation of the miners.

"She was not very beautiful, she was pregnant, not very young, she tippled, was peculiarly foul-mouthed; she had in fact sunk

very low, but there was something marvelous about her. Life had ridden roughshod over her, and made a discordant harp of her body, of which her evil tongue knew nothing. Vincent painted the discord. It is the naked woman in profile, with her arms above her head, and Vincent also made a lithograph of it and called it 'Sorrow'."

Meier-Graefe doesn't think much of the picture as art—"mere sentimental illustration, formless and lifeless"—criticism a little too severe, though just in the main. Seven years later, had this "great experience" happened to him in a similar condition of soul, he would have produced with the technique he then possessed one of the great Madonnas of all time. Germs of her are in "Sorrow", despite the callowness of his art.

"This pregnant woman," continues Meier-Graefe, "had already another child, and a mother as wretched as herself. The poor creature was ill, and had to undergo an operation to be delivered safely of her child. Vincent intervened, made debts to pay her debts, took the poor creature to Leyden to a good doctor for her operation, nursed her back to health. The woman from the gutter was to be his wife. She lacked the refined speech of his cousin" (a girl who had jilted the young evangelist with heartless lack of tact), "she was a trifle rough and a trifle wicked. The gutter had left its traces upon her. How could she be good, if she had never felt any goodness?"

The last sentence is quoted verbatim from an enthusiastic letter

Van Gogh wrote his brother, Theo, lauding and defending his soiled Madonna. His enthusiasm was to undergo some severe trials.

"In June Vincent fell ill. Sien (his Madonna) had infected him with traces of the gutter. He had to go into a hospital for several weeks." Dreadfully poor, he was put in the pauper ward. There were other sufferers from the gutter disease—some of them women. "If only he could draw these beautiful models!"

Van Gogh was still in the hospital when Sien was delivered of her child. When he had recovered sufficiently to be discharged, he chose as love nest a garret in The Hague and fetched thither his bride-to-be and her "child of another father". Here "he washed the baby when his mother forgot him, and delighted in every sign of his growing life".

They were to be married. She assented, but without enthusiasm. Van Gogh proposed they move to the country, where living was cheaper. She took the matter up with "her prostitute mother, who instilled very different ideas into her". There was always a way she could make a living in town, where men were plentiful. Vincent couldn't support her.

Sien repeated to Van Gogh her mother's opinion, and they agreed to separate. Before he left, Evangelist Van Gogh gave her some advice:

"I don't suppose you will be able to be altogether honest, but be as honest as you can. I'll try to be as straight as I can myself,

although I can tell you right away that I shall never get through life as I should like. Even if you are only a poor woman and a whore, as long as you act so that your children find a real mother in you, you will, in spite of your faults, be good in my eyes. I will try, too. I must work hard, and so must you!"

Christ couldn't have said it any better. Sien went back to her old occupation. Meier-Graefe paints Van Gogh in the country:

"Occasionally small, wretched women passed with children in their arms; a sight which called up more visions in his mind. Sien of course was a bad woman, but Vincent knew her so well that there was really nothing bad left. She was not a good woman, because she could not recognize goodness when she saw it. He ought to have shown it to her, but somehow he couldn't manage it. Perhaps he was too bad himself. There were moments when Sien's face wore an expression like a Mater Dolorosa by Delacroix, and somehow there was an element in her being quite different from her mother, with her instinctive longing for a brothel."

Nevertheless, there is something holy about a brothel to a man of Van Gogh's belief in the ultimate purity of the harlot—a belief stronger intellects than that of the poor half-crazed painter evangelist have wrestled with—and it was to such a temple he resorted a few years later, in another crisis of his life and in his art maturity—a crisis following his break with Gauguin. In a moment of mad melancholy, he sought to stab his friend. Thwarted by Gauguin, he cut off his own ear instead, wrapped it up carefully,

BATHER – *RENOIR* COURTESY DURAND-RUEL, NEW YORK

*The model is the famous nurse maid, Gabrielle*

and carried it as a present to the lady keeper of an Arles brothel—a blood atonement, maybe, in the spirit of the prophets of old, for seeking his friend's life.

In that crude painting of "Sorrow", which Meier-Graefe dismisses from consideration of art, is the interpretation of everything Van Gogh was to do with his strange, fantastic brush.

Gauguin, scarcely better balanced morally than his comrade at Arles, was at the opposite extreme—morbidly a pagan instead of a saint.

A prosperous broker in Paris, Gauguin became a "Sunday painter," dallying with his colors the one day in the week when he could get away from the stock exchange.

Like business men's art leaguers the world over, he had his hours with models hired for the occasion. A nude girl of his, exhibited in 1881 at one of the business men's art shows, attracted the attention of the critic Joris-Karl Huysmans, who admired its realism even above the nudes of Courbet.

That, of course, was the finish of Gauguin as a broker. Hereafter he would be a painter, and a painter he became, sacrificing in the process his wife, his children, his wealth and his social position—dying ultimately a diseased outcast pauper in the Islands of the South Seas, shunned by white men and by brown, and deserted by the little brown prostitute, who, at thirteen, on command of her mother, had sacrificed her virginity to him as to a god.

Gauguin painted nudes during all his art career. But it was not until he deserted the ateliers of Paris for the huts of the South Seas that he found the models that were to make him one of the great masters of all time.

"The Maori woman, even if she wanted to, could not be dowdy or ridiculous," he writes in *Intimate Journals,* that red-fire revelation of his, unmatched even by Rousseau's *Confessions,* "for she has within her that sense of decorative beauty which I have come to admire in the Marquesan art after studying it. But is there nothing but that? Isn't there anything in a pretty mouth which, when it smiles, reveals teeth that are just as pretty? These, negresses? Come! And this pretty breast with its rosy bud, so rebellious against the corset!

"What distinguishes the Maori women from all other women, and often makes one mistake her for a man, is the proportions of the body. A Diana of the chase, with large shoulders and narrow hips. However thin one of these women's arms may be, the bony structure is unobtrusive; it is supple and pretty in its lines. Have you ever noticed at a dance the young girls of the Occident, gloved to the elbow, their thin arms, their sharp, excessively sharp elbows —ugly, in one word—the forearm larger than the upper arm? I have intentionally said the women of the Occident, for the arm of the Maori woman is like that of all Oriental women, though larger. Have you also noticed at the theater the legs of the dancers, those enormous thighs (just the thighs), the knee enormous and

turned in? This probably comes from an exaggerated spreading at the joint of the femur. In the Oriental, and especially the Maori woman, the leg from hip to foot offers a pretty, straight line. The thigh is very heavy, but not wide, which makes it round and avoids that spreading which gives to so many women in our country the appearance of a pair of tongs.

"Their skin, of course, is of a golden yellow, which is ugly in some of them; but is it as ugly as all that in the rest, especially when it is naked—and when it is to be had for almost nothing?"

The color of their skin became an obsession. One of his magnificent Tahitian paintings of two nude girls he even named, "And the Gold of Their Bodies".

They were his models and his mistresses, these golden brown girls—many of them—as many as he wanted. Tehura was his favorite, a present to him from her mother—"a large child, slender, strong, of wonderful proportions", he describes her in *Noa Noa,* as he first saw her, "the golden skin of her shoulders and arms" revealed through transparent rose-colored muslin that concealed nothing.

She was his exclusively for a time. But in Tahiti the old gods were not dead. There was a priesthood of the Areois, and "in the society of the Areois, prostitution was a sacred duty". One of the mightiest of Gauguin's paintings is their Queen, nude. Tehura posed for her.

"And your lover today, was he to your liking?" Gauguin suddenly asked her one night, after they had gone to bed.

"I have no lover."

"You lie. The fish has spoken."

Then, "Tehura raised herself and looked fixedly at me. Her face had imprinted upon it an extraordinary expression of mysticism and majesty and strange grandeur with which I was unfamiliar and which I would never have expected to see in her naturally joyous and still almost child-like face."

Tehura crept softly from the bed, stood in the center of the room and chanted a long prayer to the old gods—the gods the missionaries could not drive away—the gods of the Areois. It was a prayer for protection from "sudden death".

"When she had finished her prayer, she came over to me and said with her eyes full of tears:

" 'You must strike me, strike me many, many times.'

"In the profound expression of this face and in the perfect beauty of this statue of living flesh, I had a vision of the divinity herself who had been conjured up by Tehura.

"Let my hands be eternally cursed if they will raise themselves against a masterpiece of nature!

"Thus naked, the eyes tranquil in the tears, she seemed to me robed in a mantle of orange-yellow purity, in the orange-yellow mantle of Bhixu."

Instead of striking her, Gauguin kissed her.

LA BELLE IRLANDAISE – *COURBET* METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, NEW YORK

*Courbet's powerful portrait of Whistler's Jo*

He painted Tehura as Eve.

"The Eve I have painted, she alone, logically can remain naked before one's eyes," he wrote Strindberg.

He had found in the South Seas a new Eden, and his Eve he painted "in forms and harmonies of another world"—a world foreign to Europe—that Europe where a smirking consciousness of sin has been an ingredient of the nude in art since Phryne hid with her hand a mound of loveliness when she posed for the Cnidian Venus.

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